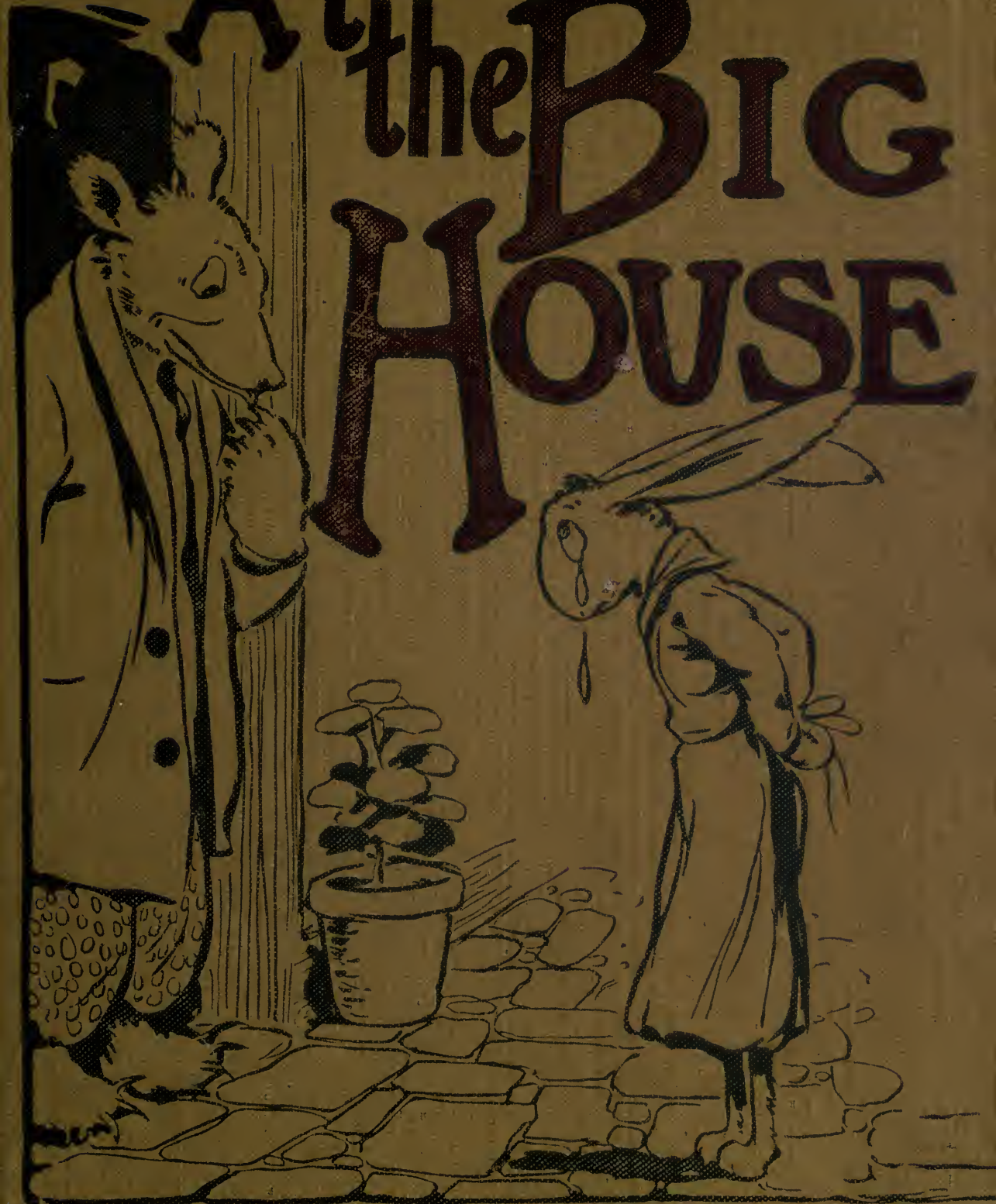


At the BIG HOUSE



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AT THE BIG HOUSE



AT THE BIG HOUSE

*Where Aunt Nancy and Aunt 'Phrony
Held Forth on the Animal Folks*

By
ANNE VIRGINIA CULBERTSON

Illustrated by
E. WARDE BLAISDELL

New Edition

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GOING DOWN TO UNCLE HENRY'S

The three children, Ned of ten, Janey of eight, and Kit, the yellow-haired laddie of five, were wild with delight at the prospect of a visit to their uncle on the old plantation where their mother had been reared; for little Kit had never been there, and the others were too young to recollect a former visit. Their mother had married and gone North to live some time before the Civil War. Then came the troubled years of strife, when it was unsafe for her to venture with her little brood into the war-swept, storm-beaten section of southern Virginia where her old home was situated. Now, however, the struggle had been over for a year, and she felt a great longing to see home once more, to know what familiar and cherished objects had survived the wreckage of war, and to give her children a glimpse of the old order of things before it should disappear for ever. She had told them so much of the place and of her life there, that they felt as if they were going to visit some well-known spot, and in particular were filled with liveliest anticipations of hearing for themselves, and in the proper surroundings, the old darky songs and tales of which she had tried to give them some idea.

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The days rolled around all too slowly for the impatient little people, but at last they were off. First came the railroad trip, then the night ride on a steamer down the great bay, and in the morning another railway journey, this time through pine woods for the most part, on a little narrow-gage train whose engine seemed to be picking and choosing its path and getting out of the way of the trees as it zigzagged in and out between them.

They were met at the rude little station by a wagon and a pair of stout farm-horses, instead of the carriage and blooded pair of other days. The children piled in on the straw at the bottom of the wagon, and thought it great fun to dodge the uncertain movements of the trunks as they jolted along over a rather rough country road, which took them for miles through the tall, slim, fragrant pines that looked so dark and somber when viewed from a distance, but which nevertheless let in plentiful rays of sunlight to flicker and dance over the soft carpet of brown needles beneath.

It was almost sunset before they came in sight of the house, which was wholly unpretentious but entirely comfortable, as was the case with many a plantation home of the old days. Situated on a slight eminence, it was surrounded by a huge open expanse whose only boundary was a far, dark rim of pines.

In the center of the lawn was a huge oak tree, a perfect giant of his race, which had looked benignantly down on the same family for a hundred and fifty years, old when the founder bought the land from the Indians, yet still full of life and vigor, bidding fair to remain through many another generation of the puny

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race of men. He towered so high above everything else that he was first to wave a stately salute to the rising sun and last to nod a grave good-night as the beams disappeared behind the pine trees. The morning rays always found him, like some benevolent patriarch, giving shelter to a little company of cows and sheep and snow-white geese; and as the sun slipped gradually around his trunk to its goal in the west, there was never an hour of the day in which his shady hospitality was not claimed by some living creature, while the shadow of his trunk marked the flight of time like some huge sun-dial whose face was half the lawn. It was impossible to regard him as a mere tree; he made you think of a vigorous, "grand old man", and after you had known him a while, he seemed like an important member of the family.

Dotted about the lawn were the various "offices," and farther back, the "quarters", where a hundred or more negroes used to be lodged in the old, busy days, when everything was manufactured on the plantation, from linsey-woolsey to cart-wheels, and everything needful raised, even the indigo for dyeing the home-made cloth.

As the wagon jolted across the lawn, the children stood up and waved their handkerchiefs to the little party assembled in the front porch. Waiting to receive them stood Uncle Henry, tall, broad-shouldered, cheery and hearty. There, too, were the dogs, barking and capering and giving noisy welcome, and a little in the background was one whom they could not fail to recognize, so often had they heard her described,—a fat, smiling, broad-faced negress, comfortable and sleek, with eyes beaming and white teeth shining, Aunt

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Nancy, their mother's old "mammy". The children were lifted down amid huggings and kissings from Uncle Henry, fawning and frolicking from the dogs, and lastly Aunt Nancy fell on them and took them to her ample bosom and made much ado over her "young Miss' chillen".

Presently the servants began running to and fro carrying steaming dishes from the "cook-house" to the "big house", and before long the children were seated about the fine old mahogany table, which had dispensed hospitality to at least four generations, and were eagerly discussing hoe-cake and dodger, "egg-bread" and muffin, waffle and fried chicken, together with other staple delicacies, familiar and unfamiliar. They were waited upon, meanwhile, by "Coonie", the house-boy, son of Eliza, the cook, who watched every mouthful taken with absorbed interest, and grinned as if each new depredation on the piled-up plates was a fresh compliment to his mother's skill in cookery.

When supper was over and the children were being put to bed, Aunt Nancy's smiling face appeared in the doorway, and she declared that she must have "anu'rr squint at dem chillen" before she took herself off for the night. "Blessid lambs!" said she, "de ve'y spit an' imidge er dey maw, 'scusen de li'l bit whar favers dey gran'paw an' ol' Mis' an' dey Uncle Hinry. Del-laws! I nuver think in de days w'en I tucken Miss Janey on my knee an' got her raidy fer baid, an' den tuck her in an' sot down by her an' tell her tales ontwel she drap off ter sleep, I nuver think, naw *ma'am*, dat I gwine live ter see her wid a hull passel er li'l chillen husse'f, naw'm, *dat* I didn'."

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At the mention of stories the children sat up in bed, clasping their arms about their knees with chins resting on top, looking eagerly at her, like so many animated interrogation points. "Please tell *us* some stories," they begged, and Janey declared that she did not believe she could possibly go to sleep in a strange bed, unless, as her mother used to do, she fell asleep on a story.

Aunt Nancy giggled and laughed until her body rocked from side to side. "Well, ef dis ain' de beatenes' lot," said she, "ter 'mence on me 'bout tales de ve'y fus' night I sot eyes on 'em. Jes' 'zackly de way dey maw useter kyar' on, fer all de worl'." But it did not take much coaxing to start her. Drawing up an old splint-bottomed chair, she sat down between the two beds and announced that she believed she would "splunge inter de bizness" by telling them the story of

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"In de ol' days," she began, "dar wuz two er de creeturs whar wuz alluz fallin' out wid one nu'rr, an' seein' who kin git ahaid uv tu'rr one, an' settin' all sawts er traps an' lay-overs-fer-ter-ketch-meddlers. Dese two creeturs wuz neener mo' ner less dan Mis' Molly Cotton-tail—w'ich some calls 'er ol' Molly Hyar'—an' Mistah Slickry Sly-fox. Sometimes one wuz in de lead, sometimes tu'rr, but mos' in gin'ly Mis' Molly she camed out ahaid, fer dat seem ter be de speshul gif' er de ladiz, ter git der own way wid der breens stidder dey fistes. Menfolks is kind er clumsy an' lumbbersome 'bout sech ez dat, an' mos' times gins deyse'fs erway fo' dey gits half thu.

"One day he come 'crost 'er w'en she'z right good an' tired, settin' in de broom-saidge fiel', down by de ol' sawmill, an' he gin 'er chase thu de woods an' inter de swamp an' out inter de fiel' on tu'rr side, 'twel she wuz all blown an' clean stove-up. 'Oh me! O my!' sez she ter husse'f, sez she, 'I reckon dish yer's whar I gotter turn up my li'l toes an' gin up de ghos', sho' 'nuff, 'kase I kain't run nu'rr step, no use ter try. Well, I hope some nice nigger man gwine git dish yer lef' behime foot er mine an' kyar' hit roun' wid him ter keep de boogers off.'"

Here the children interrupted to make inquiries

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about the rabbit's left hind foot, of whose wonderful powers they never had happened to hear.

"Dellaws!" exclaimed Aunt Nancy, "nuver yearn tell er de lef' behime foot uv a grave-yard rabbit? Whar you been livin' all dese 'ears? W'y, dat's de mos' pow'ful cunjer in de worl'. Jes' kyar' ône'r dem in yo' pockit an' youse safe ez you kin be in dish yer sufferin', dyin' worl'. Hit keeps off witches an' ha'nts an' jacky-my-lantums an' boogers in gin'l, an' hit brings good luck an' keeps away bad luck, an' hit keeps mean, low-down folks f'um puttin' spells on you an' trickin' you. But hit wu'ks bofe ways, fer ef you lose dat foot an' some one else gits hit, dey kin do jes' 'bout w'at dey wants wid you. An' you mus'n' on no kyount let no pusson teck dat rabbit foot in han' an' tetch you wid hit, fer ef you do, sump'n' mighty bad gwine happen to you, dat's jes' ez sho' ez I'm a-settin' yer runnin' on 'bout dat cunjer.

"Now whar wuz I at? Oh, yas, whar Mis' Molly wuz all tuckered out an' 'bout ter gin up de game. Well, jes' den, ez de luck had hit, she yearn a gre't blowin' er hawns an' a lot er houn's givin' tongue a fur ways off, an' she knowed dat de hunters wuz som'ers roun', so she ga'rrd husse'f toge'rr an' putt out in dat d'reckshun, an' bless goodness ef she ain' tole ol' Fox right in de midse er de dogs an' de hosses an' de hunters, an' den she double an' git outen de way in shawt order. I tell you, Mistah Slickry Sly had a mighty clost shave dat time, an' he ain' fergive Mis' Molly. He laid hit up in his min' erg'in 'er an' 'clared he wuz gwine git even wid her ef he ain' do anu'rr lick dat winter.

"He set by de fire an' study an' study 'bout hit, wid



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his haid on his han' an' his jaw drapt open, twel he got sort er run down an' his appentite gin out. Mis' Fox she wuz worrited 'bout him, same time dat she wuz putt out wid him fer settin' on his ha'nches doin' nuttin' an' lettin' her dus' roun' atter de vittles. Las', one day she tucken de broom an' shuk hit at 'im, an' sez she, 'Git outen my sight, you mis'able shif'less creetur. Ef you go an' stir yo'se'f roun' an' wu'k a li'l, hit mought start yo' blood ter goin' erg'in, an' kyore you, fer you done got a bone disease, w'ich dey calls hit *lazy-bones*, an' I'm a-gwineter kyore you right yer an' now, dat I is, fer I ain' want no fun'l 'bout dis house, dat I ain', wid all de strouds an' de coffins an' de flow's an' de hearsts; an' de vittles whar de mo'ners 'stroy at de settin'-up. Cos' me mo' dan you uver been wuf, suh.' An' wid dat she brought de broom, ker-smack! down on Mistah Sly-fox's haid.

"W'en she say de wu'd 'fun'l,' dat gin 'im a idee. He laid dar widout movin', lak he wuz sho'-nuff daid, an' he let her pick 'im up 'an putt 'im on de baid. He laid dar a w'ile lis'nin' at 'er go on, wringin' her han's an' cryin' 'O lawd! O lawd! w'at a wicked ooman I is! Done kilt my po' sick husban'! W'at I gwine do! Oh, mussy me, w'at is I gwine do!'

"Fox he wuz might'ly tickled an' let 'er run on a w'ile. He say ter hisse'f, 'Dish yer's whar I fin' out how de ol' ooman gwine 'have husse'f w'en she's a widdy.' Den he open he eyes lak he wuz pow'ful fibble an' roll 'em up in his haid, an' sezee: 'Ol' ooman, I fergives you fer dis, 'deed I does. I kain't 'spec ter las' much longer; lemme ax you, befo' I goes, ter gimme a decint fun'l, wid all de fixin's, an' I want a sarmint preached

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fer me, too, ef you hatter putt off de preachin' part fer a 'ear, so's't you kin pay fer hit. An' I wants you, please ma'am, ter 'vite all de nabers ter de settin'-up, even Mis' Molly Cotton-tail, 'kase I done fergive her, too, an' you mus' sen' her wu'd dat I gwine lay mo' peace'ble in my grave ef she'll 'come ter de settin'-up. An' I wants you ter have plenty er vittles fer de mo'ners, 'kase I ain' want no pusson ter go 'way f'um *my* fun'l an' say he's hongry.'

"Mis' Fox she jes' lit out inter cryin' an' wringin' her han's erg'in, but she gin de promuss. She say, sez she: 'Ol' man, you kin die easy, fer I gin you de wu'd uv a po' widdy ooman dat you is gwine have ev'ything dat b'longs wid a fus'-class fun'l, all de trimmin's an' de fixin's th'owed in, ef I hatter wu'k my fing-ers ter de bone over de wash-tub ter pay fer 'em, you is so. Don' you let dat idee keep you ling'in' on yer in tawment; I done gin you my wu'd, an' dat orter be 'nuff ter let you down inter de grave on flow'y baid's uv ease, 'deed hit ort.'

"Fox he thanked her, an' den he fetched a big groan an' rolled over on his back an' turnt his toes up in de air an' lay dar ez stiff an' start ez ef de bref er life clean gone outen him. Den Mis' Fox she wipe her eyes on her sleeve an' whu'l in an' git ev'ything raidy fer de settin'-up. She kill a chicken an' bile a ham an' cook a mess er greens, an' den she tuck an' sont noration ter de nabers ter come ter de settin'-up. Den she turn in an' fix up de house, an' las' uv all she gin her 'tention ter de cawpse, an' w'en she git thu wid 'im he sut'n'y look mo' harnsum dan he done w'en he wuz walkin' thu dis vale er tears. She sont off fer de coffin an' de



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flow's, an' w'en de mo'ners got dar ter do de settin' up, ev'ything wuz good an' raidy.

"Well, she gin 'em a good bait er vittles, an' dey sot up endurin' er de night a-mo'nin' an' a-groanin' an' a-dronin', an' ev'y onct in a w'iles de widdy 'ud th'ow her ap'un over her haid an' bus' inter tears an' rock back an' fo'th an' kyar' on twel some er de men-folks 'ud come an' console wid 'er, an' den she'd pick husse'f up a li'l. Slickry he kep' one eye an' one year open, an' he ketched her runnin' on wid Mistah Coon a li'l an' lookin' at 'im mighty sweet w'en she see de res' wan't lookin'. 'Uh-huh!' sezee ter hisse'f, 'dat's how de win' blow, do hit? 'Tain' gin ter ev'y man ter see w'at kind er widdy he gwine leave behime. Runnin' on wid ol' Coon right befo' my face an' eyes! Well ef I don' pay her off fer dat, my name ain' Slickry Sly-fox. Widdy indeed! Not fer long, ef she have de sesso.' An' 'twuz all he cu'd do not ter git up right den an' dar an' pick a quo'il wid 'er.

"All thu de night de mo'ners kep' hit up, rockin' back an' fo'th an' singin' lak dis, m-um-ah-um-m, m-um-ah-um-m."

Here Aunt Nancy imitated the peculiarly mournful, monotonous dirge indulged in by the negroes at their "settin'-ups," consisting of only a few notes without words, hummed through closed lips, and wailed with such persistent dolefulness through the long night that the effect is indescribably harrowing as well as melancholy. Presently she resumed her story.

"Yas, dey kep' hit up all night, dough now an' den dey'd stop fer a li'l set-to wid de vittles. W'en de mawn-in' come, all un 'em 'scusin' one er two er de wimmin-

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folks went home ter dress fer de fun'l. Long to'des twelve, yer dey comes ag'in, dress up in all de fine doin's dey kin lay der han's on. I 'spec' ol' Mis' B'ar wuz 'bout de fines' one, she have on a pink silk dress, low-neck-an'-shawt-sleeves, wid a trail an' a pink sunshade ter match, but Mis' Panter run 'er right clost, 'kase she have on a white tall'ton wid flounctes f'um top ter bot-tom an' bows er raid ribbon wid streamers behime. De gemmen all have on neckties an' white cotton gloves, an' raid hank'chers stickin' outer der pockits. I tell you dat *wuz* a fun'l! Dey all come in an' dey howdied a li'l wid Mis' Fox an' she telled 'em she wuz proud ter see 'em dar, an' den she gin 'em cheers an' ev'b'dy sot down.

"Las' some un say: 'I 'clar' ter gracious, Sis' Molly Cotton-tail ain' comed yit. Wunner w'at mek her so late? Any you-all seed 'er on de way yer? Reckon she done stop ter prink husse'f up.' No pusson ain' seed 'er, so some 'un say dey bes' sing a chune w'ile dey 'uz waitin', an' wid dat dey struck inter *Zion Weep a-Low*, an' I tell you, honeys, dey made sho'-nuff music, wid de ladiz kyary'in' de air an' de men-folks doin' de dronin'."

Here the children again interrupted to ask Aunt Nancy if she knew *Zion Weep a-Low*, and to beg that they might hear how the creatures sang it at the funeral of Mr. Fox. Nothing loath, Aunt Nancy sang it with camp-meeting fervor, notes long drawn out, with many an "oh" and "ah," and shakes and quavers impossible to describe.

"Well," the old woman resumed, "dey sung dat sper'chil plumb thu an' yit Mis' Molly ain' come, so



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dey had solemn conclave fer a w'ile an' den de preacher he got up an' cle'rd his th'roat a time er two an' 'menced talkin' 'bout Mistah Fox. He say, 'Sinner fren's, I wanster call yo' 'tention ter dis cawpse; you kin see fer yo'se'fs w'at a nice cawpse hit is, wid real white gloves, kid, suh, on de han's, an' flow's strewed all up an' down 'im; an' I wants y'all ter teck p'tickler notuss er dat, fer dat gwine l'arn you how hit pays ter be hones' an' indush'ous, 'kase ef he ain' been dat-a-way he oon had no sech a fun'l ez w'at dis is, wid me yer too, inter de bargum, ter gin 'im a send-off, all nice an' proper, w'ich Sis' Fox, de wife er de diseased, she a-goin' ter pay me fer hit on time, I oon keep her waitin' fer de fun'l sarmint twel nex' 'ear, naw suh.'

"Some er de mo'ners fetched a groan an' some er de ol' men an' wimmin 'spon' f'um de cornders, 'Yea, lawd! hones' an' indush'ous, dat's de trufe!' an' Mis' Fox gin a squeal an' fell back in her cheer an' de fun'l hatter stop 'twel dey cu'd bring 'er to wid a go'de er water. Jes' den, who shu'd putt 'er haid in de do' but Mis' Molly Hyar', but she wuz too smart an' know Mistah Slickry Sly too well ter putt her foot inside de do'. She wuz all dress' off in black, wid a big bawnet, an' a mo'nin' veil mo'n a yard long streamin' down 'er back, an' she 'uz kyar'yin' a big white hank'cher wid a black bawder.

"She howdied wid 'em a li'l an' den she stan' outside an' look in at de cawpse wid her haid on one side an' her mouf drord down lak she 'uz mighty 'flicted 'bout dis, an' she say, she do, moppin' her eyes now an' den wid de hank'cher, 'Po' Brer Fox, po' Brer Fox! I sut'n'y nuver 'spected ter see 'im lak dis. I done fer-

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give 'im all de hard feelin's dat has pass' betwix' us. He sut'n'y is a nice cawpse, Sis' Fox, an' one dat you gwine be proud uv all de res' er yo' days. I has on'y one fault ter fin' wid 'im, an' dat is, his han's ain' crost; I done yearn my granny say, an' she wuz a mighty knowin' ooman, dat de han's uv a cawpse mus' alluz be folded, look lak 'tain' a sho'-nuff cawpse lessen de han's is crost.'

"At dat ol' Mistah Slickry Sly tuck an' slip one han' 'cross tu'rr an' laid dar lookin' ez innercent ez a lamb, but, bless yo' soul, dat 'uz 'nuff fer Miss Molly, she knowed den dat 'twuz jes' de way she 'spicioned all erlong, an' dat Slickry wuz nuver mo' erlive in his life. She jes' tucken leg-bail fer her 'scape outen dat, an' erway she go wid her mo'nin' veil streamin' out behime 'er in de win'. Fox he jumped up an' upsot de preacher an' spilt all de flow's and tuck atter 'er, hard ez he cu'd split, but he was sort er hilt back by de good clo'es an' de white kid gloves, an' sidesen dat he wuz sort er stiff an' weak f'um layin' still so long, wid nuttin' ter eat inter de bargum, so he ain' see mo'n de een' uv 'er veil gwine roun' a cornder.

"Dey do say dat fun'l come mighty nigh mekin' trouble in de Fox fambly, fer he useter th'ow hit up ter de ol' ooman, ev'y now an' den, dat she done kyar' on wid Mistah Coon right in front er de cawpse uv 'er own husban'. But she knowed how ter shet 'im up; she alluz say: "'Twant no cawpse! dough hit orter bin, seein' all hit done cos' me. No 'spectable cawpse oon do no sech a low-down way, a mannerly cawpse 'ud 'a knowed w'at wuz 'spected uv hit an' *stayed* daid. An' all dem mo'ners doin' all dat mo'nin' an' settin' up fer



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nuttin'! I boun' you w'en yo' time sho'-'nuff comes I won't be able ter fin' mo'ners 'nuff in dish yer kyounty ter burry you decint. Folks ain' lak ter has der feelin's disapp'inted dat-a-way! Don' you talk ter me, long ez we owin' money on dat fun'l yit!"

MR. FOX AND MOLLY HARE GO FISHING

When Aunt Nancy had finished the tale of Mr. Fox's funeral there were no signs of sleep in the bright eyes fixed upon her face, and three piping little voices began to make pleas for just one more story.

"G'long 'way f'um yer," said she, with a chuckle, "y'all boun' ter keep me gwine on all night, I sees dat. Huccome yo' eyes so wide open? Atter all dat trabblement you bin doin', de San' Man orter bin yer long 'fo' dis. Wa't you reckon yo' maw gwine say ter dis all-night bizness?"

"Oh, she won't care if we have just *one* more, will you, Mamma?" came in anxious chorus. "And you know, Mamma," said Janey, "you used to do this way, too; you said you did, yourself."

Mamma stood in the doorway a moment, smiling and convicted. "Well, just one more, Mammy, remember, only one. Don't let them coax you for another," she said as she went downstairs to Uncle Henry.

Aunt Nancy looked as pleased as the children, but she made pretense of being completely run aground for stories, in order that she might hear the little voices raised in protest and entreaty.

"Aw, pshaw!" said Ned, "I know better'n that, for Mamma says you know enough stories to fill a book."

"Well, mebbe I does an' mebbe I doesn'," said the old

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woman, "but howsomuver dat may be, my min' done let 'em all run out, same 'z water thu a sieve, lessen hits one li'l one dat kind er git ketched in a cornder uv my 'membance. Jes' a li'l tale 'bout de time w'en Mis-tah Fox an' Mis' Molly Cotton-tail went fishin' toge'rr.

"Atter Mis' Molly done turn de tables on 'im at de fun'l, he kep' on studyin' an' studyin' an' schemin' an' schemin' ter git even wid 'er. Folks dat met up wid him in de woods knowed he wuz up ter sump'n', 'kase he went trottin' by, not stoppin' long 'nuff ter 'spon' howdy, lookin' so knowin' outen dem slant-up eyes er his'n, wid his face all drord up inter wrinkles, dat dey cu'd see he wuz plannin' out some sort er cussishness, an' dey tuck good kyare ter keep outen de way. Even w'en he wuz foolin' de dogs, settin' up on a ol' log wid his tongue hangin' out, jes' ez still 'z ef he wuz daid, so't dey'd pass 'im by, he wuz studyin', studyin' 'bout Mis' Molly. Same way w'en he went down ter de orchud ter git 'im a chickin. Mighty hard wu'k ter git de chickens down f'um de tree, but still 'tain' drive Mis' Molly outen he min'.

"How does de fox git chickens outen de trees? Umph, honeys! dat sut'n'y is a sight in de worl'! Ef you onct see dat you ain' gwine fergit hit in a hurry. Well, one'r dese yer cloudy nights he comes 'long un'need de tree whar de fowels is roostin' an' fin's 'em all fas' asleep, an' he knows dat ain' gwine do, 'kase dey locks der claws tight roun' de limb an' goes ter sleep, an' de claws stay locked ontwel dey wakes up. He know he 'bleeged ter rouse 'em 'fo' he kin git 'im one. So he gins a sharp bark an' jumps up, an' w'en dey 'mence ter cackle he 'mence ter succle roun' an' roun' un'need

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de tree, faster an' faster, jumpin' an' barkin'. De chickens dey turn an' twis' der haid ter watch 'im, an' las' some fool fowel dat's kind er weak in her haid gits so dizzy dat she jes' draps right down an' he gobbles 'er up in a jiff. Yassuh, he's a gre't schemer. He nuver do anything in a hurry, jes' plan hit all out good an' den teck his time to hit. He say he gwine git even wid Molly Hyar' yit if it teck 'im twel Chris'mus, an' 'twuz gittin' 'long to'des dat time befo' he wuz raidy fer 'er.

"One col' mawnin' he went streakin' thu de woods, lif'in' up one paw an' stoppin' ter lissen fer de dogs now an' den, but de coas' wuz cle'r an' he kep' on 'twel he got ter Mis' Molly's. He knock on de do' but she ain' year 'im kase she wuz busy rockin' two er de chillen whar wuz sick, an' singin' at de top uv 'er voice ter drown de noise de urr chillen wuz makin' ez dey racket roun' de house, playin' hoss an' leap-frog an' ketcher, an' cuffin' an' tusslin' 'twel ol' man Hyar' wuz 'bleeged ter leave de ol' ooman de bag ter hol' an' teck his pipe an' go an' set on de bench outside de do' ter git some peace an' comfu't.

"Mis' Hyar' kep' on singin' at de top uv 'er voice:

*'Oh Bunny is my baby,
Bunny is my lamb,
I loves my Bunny better
Dan a gre't big dish er ham.*

*'Oh Honey is my baby,
Honey is my lamb,
I loves my Honey better
Dan a gre't big roas'ed yam.'*



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“‘Drat dish yer Bunny an’ Honey,’ sez Fox ter hisse’f, sezee, ‘wimmin-folks sut’n’y does mek fools er deyse’fs over dey chillen, an’ meks de chillen fools, inter de bargum.’ Wid dat he fotched a big lick on de do’ wid his walkin’-stick an’ Mis’ Molly gin a scream an’ jumped so’t she mos’ drapt Bunny an’ Honey. She a



’im fer ter come in, an’ she sut’n’y wuz s’prise w’en she see who ’twuz, but she ain’ let on, not her; dat wan’t her way. She mek ’er manners an’ ax ’im fer ter git a cheer fer hisse’f, ’kase he cu’d see dat her han’s wuz full, an’ den she ’mence ter run on ’bout de wedder same ’z folks does dese days w’en dey ain’ know w’at else ter say.

“Fox he wuz mighty p’lite an’ mannerly an’ chock

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full er pooty talk. He say, ‘‘Clar’ ter goodness, Mis’ Molly Cotton-tail, you sut’n’y does look snipshus. ‘Pears lak you git younger an’ younger ev’y ‘ear, you sut’n’y does, ma’am.’

“Molly snicker, but she wan’t tucken in by him. She say, ‘Hysh, man! Better not let Mis’ Fox year you go on dat-a-way! ‘Sidesen dat, I knows I ain’ no mo’ ter look at dese days dan a lean crow wid a graveyard cough.’

“‘Sho! Mis’ Molly,’ sezee, ‘you ain’ do yo’s’e’f jestice, ‘deed you ain’. I nuver has see you lookin’ better. I’ll back you ‘gins’ all de triflin’ young gals roun’ dese diggin’s,’ sezee. He run on dat-a-way ontwel he think he got her good an’ please’, an’ den he say, ‘Mis’ Hyar’, I done call roun’ ter see ef you oon lak ter go fishin’. I knows a monst’ous fine place, whar de fishes is thicker’n blackba’ies in a patch, an’ I teck you right dar ef you sesso. ‘Tain’ no fur ways, neener.’

“Mis’ Hyar’ she say, she do, ‘Thanky, Mistah Slickry; thanky, suh. I wish ter gracious I *could* go wid you, but you see how ‘tis. Yer’s Bunny an’ Honey sick on my han’s; real croupyfried, dey is, an’ de urr chillen cuttin’ up lak de ol’ Harry, an’ all my wu’k layin’ roun’ loose. I ‘clar’ dem chillen gwine run me ‘stracted. You Blinker! you Winker! come yer, bofe un you, an’ set yo’s’e’fs down by de chimbly an’ stop dat uverlas’in’ scufflin’! Jumper an’ Thumper, I wants you ter come yer an’ shake han’s wid Mistah Slickry Sly-fox an’ do lak you had some raisin’, stidder gwine on wid dat fist-an-skull-fight right in front er de comp’ny.’

“De chillen done lak she tol’ ‘em, an’ Fox he kep’ on ‘suadin’ an’ ‘suadin’. Mis’ Molly mighty fond er gwine



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roun' 'joyin' husse'f an' she ain' none too fond er housewuk, so las' she say, 'Well, Mistah Sly-fox, I dunno how in de worl' I gwine wid you, 'deed I don'. But mebbe I kin git de ol' man ter look atter de chillen, an' ef I leave plenty er pollygollic an' squilts an' hoarhoun'-an'-boneset tea fer Bunny an' Honey, I reckon dey'll git on, an' I kin set out a col' snack fer 'em all 'twel I git back.'

"So she call de ol' man ter come in an' min' de chillen, an' I tell you he come right slow, draggin' his footses an' knockin' de ashes outen his pipe. She show him de vittles an' gin him de pollygollic an' squilts an' de hoarhoun'-an'-boneset tea an' tol' him ter dose Bunny an' Honey ev'y time dey cried. Wid dat de chillen all set up a turr'bl' squall, but she ain' pay no 'tention, jes' tucken her shawl an' a ol' baskit an' putt out fer de branch wid Slickry Sly-fox.

"On de way she say, 'Mussy me, Mistah Slickry, w'at we gwine do fer poles an' lines? I wuz so boddered up, gittin' 'way f'um dem chillen, dat I ain' think nuttin' 'bout poles an' lines.'

"'Nemmine,' sez de Fox, sezee, 'I done tuck kyare er dat. I kain't be pestered kyar'yin' poles an' lines back an' fo'th, so I keeps 'em hid 'way in a ol' holler tree nigh de branch. I'll fit you out all right, Mis' Molly; don' you 'sturb yo'se'f 'bout dat.'

"Dey went 'long mighty fren'ly an' familiuous, an' ol' Fox git so monst'ous p'lite dat las' he say, 'I 'clar' ter gracious, Mis' Molly, you mus' 'scuse me fer bein' so onmannerly ez ter let you kyar' dat baskit. 'Tain' fitten fer a lady lak you ter do dat. Please, ma'am, ter lemme tote de baskit.'

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"Mis' Molly she gin 'im back jes' ez good 'z he sont. She say, 'Deed, Mistah Fox, I kain't nohows think er lettin' a gemman lak you be seed totin' a baskit; you mus'n' name dat ter me no mo'."

"Fox he 'sist an' 'sist, an' Molly she kep' on makin' out she ain' want 'im ter kyar' de baskit, but las' she han' hit over to him, dough ef dey'd bin anything in hit, Mis' Molly 'd a-seed 'im funder 'fo' she'd a-let 'im tote hit; she done know 'im too well fer dat.

"Las' dey come ter de branch, an' Fox he putt de baskit on de groun' an' sot down on a log ter ketch his win' befo' he got ter wu'k. Mis' Molly she wuz honin' ter begin de fishin', so she say dat ef he'll jes' tell 'er whar de poles an' lines wuz hid, she'd go an' fotch 'em an' git de bait raidy.

"Fox he say, 'So do, Mis' Molly; so do. Jes' go up de branch yonner a li'l ways an' look in dat ol' holler sickymo' dar an' you'll fin' a lot er poles an' tackle, an' you kin jes' teck yo' ch'ice.'

"She went skitin' up de bank an' poked 'er haid inter de sickymo' tree, lookin' fer de poles. Bless goodness, 'twan't none dar! an' w'at's mo' 'tain' nuver bin none. She think mebbe she done gone ter de wrong tree, so she went traipsin' roun' ter ev'y sickymo' she see on de bank an' git husse'f all frazzle out widout findin' nair' pole er line, w'ile ol' Fox sot up on de log smokin' an' laughin' ter hisse'f over Mis' Molly an' de poles.

"Las' she come back an' tol' 'im dar wan't no sickymo' wid poles inside, an' he say, he do, 'W'at dat, Mis' Molly? You tell me you kain't fine dem poles? I'se 'bleeged ter see dat wid my own eyes 'fo' I kin b'lieve hit,' an' wid dat he pull hisse'f up an' mosey ter de sick-



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ymo'. W'en he git dar he poke his haid inside an' den dror hit out an' squat down on his ha'nches an' drap his jaw open lak he'z so s'prise he kain't talk. Las' he say, 'Well, *Mis' Molly!* I'se dat flabbergasted I sca'cely kin git my bref. On'y yist'd'y I wuz yer, an' dem poles wuz all safe an' soun', an' now some no-kyount, consum-bunkshus thief-er-de-worl' done bin yer an' he'p hisse'f ter my propputty. I wish I had 'im yer dis minnit. I 'clar' ter you I'd jes' natchelly wear dem poles out on his hide, *dat* I would! Seem lak a half-way decint pusson orter lef' me jes' one pole ter putt me in min' er de res'. I nuver knowed no pusson dat mean befo', lessen 'twuz de man whar shave hisse'f jes' befo' he die, so's'ter cheat de barber ouden de job. Yer you, *Mis' Molly*, done come all dis way ter go fishin', an' nair' pole er tackle fer you. Hit sut'n'y is a shame.'

"*Mis' Molly* feel kind er saw'y fer 'im, so she say, 'Oh, nemmine, Mistah Slickry Sly. I ain' min' dat so much, but I is sort er disapp'inted not ter teck home some fish ter de chillens, 'kase I know dey all fixin' dey moufs fer a nice mess dis evenin'.'

"Fox he study a w'ile an' den he say, 'Well, I tell you, *Mis' Hyar'*, ef you be willin' ter fish lak I does, now an' den, mebbe we kin git a mess fer de chillen yit. Now you set up yer on de bank a minnit an' I show you dat ef you jes' got de gumption, you kin git de fish widout no tackle. Hits dat-a-way in de fishin' bizness, anyhow; you kin have all de pole an' line you wanster, but ef you ain' got de gumption you ain' git de fish.'

"Wid dat he wag hisse'f down de bank an' stan' on de aidge wid his nose near de water, peerin' in, an' 'long come a fool young fish dat ain' know 'nuff ter know

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w'at 'twuz stannin' styarin' in at 'er. Ol' Fox ain' move a muscle 'twel de fish wuz right beneaf his nose. Den he splunge one paw in an' swipe de fish out an' lan' 'er in de baskit 'fo' she kin flop 'er fins twict.

"He call Mis' Molly down ter see, an' she wuz plumb tickelt ter def wid de way he done kotch dat fish. She say, 'Well, ef uver I see de beat er dat sence I bin chaw-in' vittles! Mistah Sly-fox, I'se 'bleeged fer ter git you ter l'arn me dat way er fishin'; hit beats de ol' way all holler.'

"Fox he say, 'Tain' no trick 't all ter do dat. All you gotter do is ter putt yo' nose down in de water an' keep jes' ez still 'z dat rock yonner, an' de fus' fish you see beneaf yo' nose, jes' swipe yo' paw in an' git 'er.'

"Mis' Molly she do lak he tell 'er, an' stan' dar wid 'er nose poke down so's't hit tetched de water, fer ol' Fox ain' let on to 'er dat he kep' his nose jes' ouden de reach er de water. She stood dar an' she stood dar, but no fish ain' come 'long, fer ol' Slickry he keep up a loud talkin' an' make all de rackit he kin so's'ter scare de fishes away. She stan' dar an' she stan' dar, an' hit git 'long to'des night an' turn' colder an' colder, an' las' Mis' Molly git tired an' say she b'lieve she 'bout raidy ter gin up an' go home. But Fox he aig 'er on an' tell 'er not ter budge, 'kase he sho' dat w'en de fishes come out ter git der supper dey boun' ter come dat way. Water git colder an' colder all de time, an' Mis' Molly 'gun ter shake, an' her toofs chatter lak she have de ager. Las' she say, 'Deed, Mistah Sly-fox, I kain't stan' dis no longer; 'deed I kain't. I gotter quit dis minnit er drap yer in my tracks; dat I has.'

"Fox he chuckle ter hisse'f lak he know sump'n



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mighty funny, an' he say, sezee, 'Come 'long, den, Mis' Molly; 'tis mos' night. I reckon yo' chillen an' yo' ol' man be 'spectin' you long 'fo' dis.' Wid dat he pick up de baskit wid de fish in hit an' mek up de bank. Mis' Molly she wuz gwine foller, but, bless yo' soul, w'en she go ter lif' 'er haid, she foun' dat her nose done froze fas' ter de water, 'kase de ice bin makin' all de time she wuz stannin' dar, an' ol' Fox know dat mighty well w'en he call 'er down de bank. She pull an' she haul, an' she kick an' she thrash, but 'twan't no use; dar she wuz an' dar she stay.

"Fox he wuz up de bank jes' laughin' an' kyar'vin on. He git so full er laugh an' fun dat las' he tuck ter chasin' he own tail roun' an' roun' in a sucele, jes' 'zackly de way de dogs does. Mis' Molly she year 'im gwine on, an' she sing out, 'Dat's all right! You got yo' innin's fer onet in yo' life. High time you did done dat, seein' how many times I done fool you, but I ses ter you dat you gwine laugh on de wrong side er yo' mouf befo' I gits thu wid you, sho' ez my name's Molly Hyar'; dat you is!"

"She kep' on twis'in' an' turnin' an' tryin' ter wu'k 'er nose free, but 'twuz long time 'fo' she got hit a-loose, an' den she hatter leave a piece er de skin stickin' ter de ice. W'en Fox see she wuz onloose he stop chasin' his tail roun' an' pick up de baskit an' light out f'um dar widout stoppin' ter say far'-you-well, an' 'twuz long time 'fo' he had de insurance ter come whar Mis' Molly wuz.

"'Um-umph!' she say, ez she g'long home, 'dis sarve me right fer bein' sech a fool 'bout fishin'. Fishermens ain' got no sense, nohows. Seem lak de chanct er gittin'

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one'r dem li'l scaly-backed creeturs jes' crowds ev'ything else clean outen der haid. Yer me, no fish, nose all skunt up, dish yer th'ee-mile walk befo' me an' a hongry ol' man an' cross chillen at de een' uv hit. Atter dis I gwine stay home an' do de eatin' an' let some un else do de ketchin'.

"Wid dat she light out fer home, wid her nose jes' a-achin' her so's't she kain't nohows hol' hit still. She keep a-twitchin' an' a-wu'kkin' hit ter git some ease, but seem lak she nuver git clean over dat spe'yunce, 'kase de hyar's been twitchin' der noses uver sence. Sometimes hit look lak dey's mekin' faces at you an' actin' sort er scawful, but 'tain' so; hit's jes' 'kase ol' Mis' Hyar' got her nose fros'ed dat time she went fishin' wid Slickry Sly-fox.

"An' now I gotter quit, fer I year yo' maw callin'. Ya'am, comin', jes' ez soon 'z I kin git dese chillen good an' tuck up in baid."

MR. HARE IMITATES MR. BEAR

The next morning, after breakfast, the children heard a strange voice in the region of the back porch and went out to investigate. Aunt 'Phrony had come up to the house to beg for quilt pieces, and as she sat on the porch-steps, waiting until her wants could be attended to, the children saw her for the first time. She was tall and thin and very straight, with high cheek-bones and piercing dark eyes. She wore a red handkerchief about her neck and large brass rings in her ears, and she claimed Indian blood, in proof of which she was in the habit of calling attention to her hair, saying "'twan't no nigger-wool." In fact, while it was closely kinked, its jetty tint and finer texture distinguished it from the coarse and rusty-black hair of the pure African type. When questioned as to her ancestry, she would say, if in a communicative mood: "Yas, Mars' Torm done buyed me and brung me up yer f'um Nawf Ca'liny. My daddy wuz a Nawf Ca'liny Injun, a Churrykee, an' my mammy she wuz a slave-ooman, dat huccome me ter be bawn a slave. Ef *she'd* a-bin a Injun an' *him* a *slave*, den I'd bin bawn free, 'kase de chillen alluz b'longed wid dey mammy; she free, dey free; she slave, dey slaves."

As Aunt 'Phrony sat with folded arms, gazing off at the rim of pines that formed a green horizon about the

MR. HARE IMITATES MR. BEAR

plantation, she looked rather forbidding, very different from the fat and laughter-loving Aunt Nancy. The children did not venture near until she pretended to be suddenly aware of their presence and condescended to say, "Is dese Miss Janey's chillen, whar I done year tell 'bout comin' down ter see dey Uncle Hinry? Come yer an' lemme see ef air' one er you favers yo' maw. Huh-uh! Nair' one half ez good-lookin' ez der maw, er uver gwine be. But I dunno ez we kin 'spec' dat f'um chillen dese days."

Notwithstanding this unfavorable verdict, Aunt 'Phrony thawed by degrees, and presently Ned ventured to ask if she knew any tales. She shook her head. "Who? Me? Reckon I got sump'n else ter do 'sides studyin' 'bout tales. W'at kind er tales you talkin' 'bout?"

"Why, about the animals," explained Janey; "tales like those Aunt Nancy tells us."

At the bare mention of Nancy, Aunt 'Phrony pricked up her ears, for the two women were ancient and immemorial foes. Plantation gossip said that Aunt Nancy had coolly married out of hand the very man on whom Aunt 'Phrony had fixed her young affections, and had never been pardoned for doing so.

"Dellaws!" she sniffed, "dat ooman bin tellin' you-all tales? Mis'able ol' nigger tales, I be boun'. Ef I wan't gittin' so bad in my 'memb'ance an' so shawt in de bref I cu'd whu'l in an' tell you heap er Injun tales whar I useter year my daddy tell; dey beats all de nigger tales uver wuz knowed."

"Did any of the Indian stories have a rabbit in them?" asked Ned.



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"Rabbit?" said she. "You mean ol' Hyar'? We ain' call 'im 'Rabbit' yer in Ferginny; jes' 'ol' Hyar', er 'Mis' Molly Hyar', er 'Mis' Molly Cotton-tail.' De creetur go by all dem names. Dar wuz a Injun hyar' an' a nigger hyar', an' de Injun hyar' cu'd do mos' anything de nigger one cu'd, an' mo', too, inter de bargum."

"Aunt 'Phrony," said Janey, who was a little diplomat, "won't you please tell us some of the things he did, so that we can see if he was anything like Aunt Nancy's hare?"

'Phrony's pride was aroused. Determined not to be outdone by Nancy, she sat for a while thinking and then began:

"In de ol' times de Hyar' wuz de bes' known er de creeturs an' de bigges' man uv all, an' dis huccome so: he have de gif' er mummickin' anyb'dy an' ev'yb'dy, an' he go roun' 'mong's de humans lettin' on he 'z dis pusson an' dat pusson an' tu'rr pusson, an' doin' all sorts er harm an' mekin' all kin's er mischief dat-a-way. Las' de people git tired er dis an' dey say dey ain' gwine stan' hit no longer, so dey git up a big hunt an' chase 'im clean outen dat kyountry. Den he go 'way off ter nu'rr place, whar dey ain' know 'im, an' set out ter bamboozle de creeturs same 'z he bin doin' wid de humans, mekin' out he 'z fus one thing an' den nu'rr, an' mummickin' ev'ything he see folks do er year 'em say. Dar wuz one time w'en dem smarty ways come nigh bein' de def uv 'im, an' dat w'at I gwine tell you 'bout.

"One day he wuz gwine down de road, jiggitty-jig, wid one year turnt ter de back an' one ter de front, so's't he kain't miss yearin' ev'ything dat go on, w'en all ter onct he seed Mistah Growly Grum-b'ar comin',

MR. HARE IMITATES MR. BEAR

lookin' mighty big an' empawtant. Hyar' ain' nuver met up wid 'im befo' an' he feel kind er jubous 'bout 'im, so he scrouch down by de side er de road in de hopes Mistah B'ar ain' gwine notuss 'im. But B'ar he wall his eye roun' an' ketch sight'uv 'im, an' he stop an' look down at 'im ouden de cornder uv his eye, lak Hyar' so small he sca'cely kin see 'im, an' den he say, 'Souls an' bodies! who dis li'l feller skulkin' yer by de side de road? Is I uver see you befo'? I kain't seem ter 'member hit, but den I done knowed so many creeturs in my time dat you kain't 'spec' me ter weight down my min' wid 'em all. Co'se dey all 'members me; dey kain't he'p doin' dat, I reckon, but dey mus'n' git hu'ted in der feelin's ef I kain't kyar' 'em all on my min'.'

"Hyar' boun' ter mek hisse'f 'greeable ef he kin, so he say, 'Naw, suh; I ain' nuver have de good luck ter meet up wid you befo', but ef I had, I cu'dden 'spec' a sho'-nuff gemman lak you is ter 'member no sech trash ez w'at I is. I bin yearin' dis long time dat you is de bigges' man roun' dese parts, an' I has bin might'ly sot on mekin' yo' 'quaintance.'

"B'ar right please' wid dat sort er talkin' an' he ax Hyar' ter walk 'long wid 'im a w'iles so dey kin git 'quainted. Ol' Hyar' go sidlin' 'long wid 'im, tryin' ter teck big steps lak him, mighty 'feard dem big feet gwine tromple on 'im, but bowin' an' scrapin' an' sayin', 'Yassuh!' 'Jesso, suh!' 'I b'lieve you, suh!' ontwel Mistah Growly Grum think he's Big-man-me fer sho'. An' I tell y'all chillen, *now*, dat's de way ter git on wid folks. Jes' you sing small an' let dem kyar' de heft er de chune.

"Ol' man B'ar git mo' an' mo' empawtant an' g'long



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puffin' out his chist an' layin' down de law wid one paw slapped on tu'rr, ontwel dey git ter his house. He done mek up his min' by dat time dat Hyar' wuz de bes' comp'ny he met up wid in a long time, so he 'vite him ter come in an' have some dinner. Hyar' say he ain'



kyare ef he do, an' he go an' set down by de fire w'iles Mistah Growly Grum stir roun' 'mong's de pots an' de kittles.

"All de time dinner wuz cookin' ol' Hyar' wuz jes' a-layin' hit onter Mistah B'ar wid his flattersome talk.

MR. HARE IMITATES MR. BEAR

Sezee, 'Well, you sut'n'y is a cook f'um 'way back. I oon b'lieve sech a big man ez w'at you is cu'd be so handy ef I ain' see hit fer myse'f.'

"Dar wuz a pot er peas on bilin', an' B'ar look roun' on all de she'fs fer some fat ter putt in wid 'em, but 'twan't none dar. Den he tucken out a knife an' sharp hit up a li'l, an' ol' man Hyar's heart jump up in his mouf w'en he see dat. 'Name er gracious!' sezee ter hisse'f, 'lemme git outen dis! 'Pears ter me he gittin' raidy ter kyarve me up fer de dinner. Jes' my luck! Stidder gittin' sump'n ter eat, I is gwineter git et myse'f.'

"But B'ar wan't studyin' 'bout him. He jes' walk up ter de pot an' cut a li'l gash in his neck an' let de grease run inter de peas. 'Tain' hu't him 't all, 'kase de b'ars gits mighty fat in de fall off'n de mast whar draps f'um de trees. Dey jes' stuffs deyse'fs den, so't dey kin sleep all thu de winter widout wakin' up ter git sump'n ter eat; lives off'n der own fat, dey does, all thu de col' wedder. Well, B'ar's fat wuz so monst'ous thick jes' den dat he ain' feel de cut, an' g'long gittin' de dinner ez ef he ain' even got a scratch on 'im.

"Ol' Hyar' wuz might'ly please' an' clap his han's an' kick his heels on de cheer-rungs, and mek gre't 'miration. He say 'twuz de handies' 'rangemint he uver see, ter kyar' yo' bacon roun' wid you in yo' own hide, an' he 'low ter hisse'f, right den an' dar, dat he gwine do de same thing er bus'.

"Den dey drord up cheers an' sot down ter de table, an' Mistah Hyar' 'mence gwine on 'bout de dinner. He say, 'You mus' 'scuse me ef I ax fer nu'rr he'p er dem peas. I lak ter look atter my manners, but 'deed yo'

AT THE BIG HOUSE

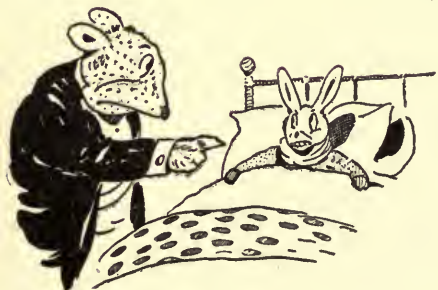
cookin' done druv 'em clean outen my min'. Yo' fat got a flavor to hit dat suit my tas'e prezackly; 'deed hit have.'

"He run on dat-a-way, an' all de time he wuz jes' a-honin' ter try de same trick hisse'f, so las' he tell Mistah B'ar he gwine gin a dinin' nex' day an' he ax 'im will he come 'roun' an' he'p 'stroy vittles. He say he got a nice mess er peas he gwine treat him wid, but, bless yo' soul, de peas wuz right dat minnit in his naber-folkses gyardins.

"B'ar he say he come ef nuttin' hinner, an' Hyar' go kitin' back ter steal de peas fer de dinin'.

"Nex' day Hyar' go out ter meet Mistah B'ar an' bringed 'im in an' fotched a cheer an' gin 'im a pipe. He go cavawtin' roun' de room lak he's on springs, showin' off w'at a spry, handy man he wuz. He git de peas on bilin' an' den he look roun' in de cubberd fer de fat. Las' he say, 'Well, I'll be snickered! ef I ain' fergit de fat fer dem peas. Now, w'at I gwine do? Kain't gin you ol' po'-trash vittles widout no grease in 'em.' Wid dat he ups an' tecks a knife an' walks over ter de pot an' cuts a li'l gash in his neck. Lo, beholdst you! nair' smidgin' er grease drap out, but, mussy me! how de blood done spurt all over de ha'th, an' li'l mo' he'd bin a goner ef Mistah B'ar ain' bin dar ter bine him up an' doctor him atterwu'ds. B'ar wuz a right smart uv a doctor in dem days, fer he spen' so much time out in de laurel dat he know all 'bout yarbs an' sech ez dat.

"W'en Hyar' wuz on his footses ag'in, gwine roun' de house mighty limp an' low-down-in-de-valley, Mistah B'ar gin him a sho'-nuff tongue-lashin'. Sezee, 'You



MR. HARE IMITATES MR. BEAR

moughter knowed dey wan't no grease in a mis'able lean creetur lak you is. Yer *I* is, all fat up fer de winter; dat de time w'en I gotter lay roun' an' snooge an' have no chanct ter pick up vittles. But you is on de go, keepin' de paf hot f'um 'ear's een' ter 'ear's een. I lak ter know how you 'spec's ter lay up fat? W'at mek you think, anyhow, dat you kin do de same ez me, you po' li'l knee-high-to-a-hoppah-grass? Um-umph! w'at sort er worl' dish yer be ef all mens kin do de same things? You bes' g'long now an' 'tend ter yo' own bizness, an' set dis down in yo' 'memb'ance, dat dar ain' no pusson mek mo' mistakes er git mo' laugh at dan de man whar tries ter be tu'rr folks stidder bein' hisse'f. You year me talkin'."



THE FRIENDSHIP OF MR. BEAR AND MIS' TURKEY

"Well," said Ned, when Aunt 'Phrony had finished the story of how the hare imitated the bear, "I always thought that bears were cross and ate people up. I should think the hare would have been afraid to have *him* doctor him. I wouldn't want any old bear to come fooling around me."

"Who 'feard? Hyar'? Him! Naw, suh!" said Aunt 'Phrony, "he ain' knowin' w'at 'tis ter be 'feard er anything in dis 'varsil worl'. Sidesen dat, I done tol' you he sof'-sawder ol' Mistah B'ar an' gin 'im 'nuff sweet talk ter fill a honey-gum. But Hyar' he wuz mo' diff'nt f'um tu'rr creeturs. 'Twan't safe fer de res' un 'em ter fool wid Mistah B'ar; '*deed* hit wan't. Dat putt me in min' er de time w'en Mis' Tukkey think she gwine mek fren's wid 'im, an' dis how hit happen:

"B'ar useter live in de low-groun's an' wu'k fer his livin' same 'z tu'rr folks, but atter w'iles he git tired er dat, an' sezee, 'I jes' 'bout b'lieve I gwine quit wu'k an' go whar I kin git me 'nuff ter do me widout usin' so much elber-grease in de gittin'. W'at de use er livin', anyhow, ef you gotter spen' all yo' time dustin' 'roun' atter sump'n jes' ter keep de bref er life in you? Naw, suh! 'tain' wuf de w'ile, lessen you kin do a lot er restin' up an' have some fun inter de bargum."

"So he g'long off up inter de big mountains an' hide

MR. BEAR AND MIS' TURKEY

hisse'f erway in de laurel an' res' an' sleep jes' w'en he feel lak hit, an' de baluns er de time go romantin' up an' down de mountains kind er slow an' lazy, sort er studyin' whar he gwine putt his foot down nex', 'joyin' hisse'f might'ly, widout doin' no wu'k 't all, jes' pickin' up sump'n ter eat ez he trabel 'long, an' dat wan't hard. He 'uz 'tickler fond er 'lasses an' sweet apples, 'kase he got a mighty sweet toof, but honey wuz de dish w'at hit 'im in de bull's-eye an' go ter de right spot ev'y time. He wuz willin' ter trabel miles ter fin' 'im some honey, but ef he kain't fin' any, den de nex' bes' thing wuz a mess er raid ants. He'd sleep all day long on er ridge in de wo'm summer days, but ef nu'rr b'ar come dat-a-way an' fetched 'im a li'l tap in his sleep, he'd r'ar up on his behime laigs an' den dey'd have hit, fer all de worl' lak dese yer prize-fighters, boxin' an' cuffin', an' wres'lin' 'twel one'r dem wuz th'own. Den tu'rr un 'ud grab 'im by de th'oat an' growl an' growl 'twel you'd 'a thought he 'z gwine eat 'im up, but pres'n'y he'd onclinch an' let 'im go wid one las' growl ter tell 'im, 'You better not fool wid me erg'in, suh.'

"He live 'long dat-a-way, eatin' an' sleepin', wid a li'l walkin' an' fightin' th'owed in, 'twel one day he met up wid a li'l ol' fool wil' tukkey. She was mincin' an' tippin' 'long, fer all de worl' lak dat no-kyount gal er Aunt Nancy's w'en she git on her Sunday clo'es.

"Pres'n'y she see Mistah B'ar, an' stidder bein' 'feard, lak she orter bin ef she had a grain er sense in dat li'l ol' haid er her'n, she 'mence ter mek gre't 'miration. He look so big an' strong she think he mus' be a monst'ous fine man, an' dar whar she git fooled, lak lots er wimmins I bin knowin'.



AT THE BIG HOUSE

"She hop up in front er him an' say, ' 'Scuse me, Mistah Growly Grum, suh, ef I axes you ter stop a minnit an' lemme look at you. Lan' er de livin'! I nuver is see a man tall ez w'at you is. An' how big an' strong you looks, an' dat long brown fur you wears on yo' hide sho' is harnsum. Please, suh, lemme walk 'long wid you li'l ways an' look at you some mo'?"

"B'ar kind er growl sump'n nu'rr way down in his th'roat an' she tucken hit fer yes an' go tippin' an' mincin' 'long mo' wusser dan befo', mighty proud ter let tu'rr folks on de mountain see 'er in sech comp'ny. W'en dey git ter Mistah B'ar's house, she stick her haid in de do' an' w'en she see all de dirt an' de mess, for he wuz too mawtal lazy uver ter clean up de house, she say, she do, 'Oh, me! oh, my! Mistah Growly Grumb'ar, you sut'n'y does need a ooman ter look atter you an' cook yo' vittles an' tidy up de house. Please, suh, ter lemme stay an' wu'k fer you, an' de on'ies' thing I ax is de priv'lidge er settin' an' lookin' at you w'en I isn' busy.'

"B'ar say ter hisse'f, 'Dish yer a sho'-nuff bawn fool, but mebbe she kin wait on me, so I reckon I let her stay, fer a w'ile, anyhow's.'

"So he say to 'er, 'Well, Mis' Tukkey, sence you is so pow'ful sot on hit, I s'pose you kin stay; but you mus'n' look at me too often, 'kase I ain' use ter bein' styar'd at an' I dunno w'at I mought do ef I got riled.'

"Mis' Tukkey say she do 'er lookin' w'iles he'z ersleep, so he tell er ter stay ef she wanten.

"Den she whu'l in an' clean up de house, an' cook 'im a good dinner, an' w'en he tucken a nap she git 'er a



MR. BEAR AND MIS' TURKEY

li'l bush an' keep de flies offen him, an' set an' look an' look ez ef she ain' nuver gwine see 'im erg'in.

"She kep' hit up dat-a-way fer so long time, an' git wusser an' wusser 'bout him ev'y day ontwel at las' she dunno how in de worl' she gwine keep f'um lookin' at 'im w'iles he wuz 'wake.

"Now B'ar he had de fashion er gwineter sleep ev'y day 'bout de time he 'mence ter git a li'l hongry, an' so he wuz mighty ap' ter dream 'bout sump'n nu'rr ter eat, an' w'atsomuver he dream 'bout, dat de thing he 'bleeged ter have w'en he wake up, an' he alluz g'longed out an' got hit.

"Mis' Tukkey fin' dis out, so ev'y day w'en he wake up she step to'des 'im an' say, 'Mistah Growly Grum, Mistah Growly Grum, w'at you done dream 'bout dis time? Please fer to tell me, suh, so I kin know w'at fixin's ter git raidy ter go wid hit fer dinner.'

"B'ar he 'ud tell her, an' den go 'way an' git w'at-somuver hit mought be.

"Mis' Tukkey git so sot-up on kyount er 'sociatin' wid Mistah B'ar dat tu'rr creeturs cu'd sca'cely putt up wid her foolishness, but w'en dey talk hit over dey alluz tell one nu'rr dat sump'n 'bleeged fer ter happen ter teck down her fedders.

"I done tol' you she git mo'n mo' sot on Mistah B'ar, an' kep' squintin' at 'im 'roun' de cornders an' cuttin' her eye at 'im w'en he wan't lookin' ontwel de wunner is dat he ain' ketch 'er long befo'. But his eyes wuz set so clost toge'rr, same ez wid all de b'ars, dat hit mek him near-sighted, an' ef he see you a li'l piece off he ain' kin tell you f'um a stump. But Mis' Tukkey



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git so owdacious dat atter w'iles he do ketch 'er, an' he soon git tired uv her an' her foolishness. He ain' sayin' nuttin', 'kase he wan't knowin' jes' w'at he gwine do 'bout hit. Las', one day, he see her lookin' at him jes' ez he wuz wakin' up f'um his nap.

"She walk up ter him, same 'z alluz, an' say, 'Mistah B'ar, Mistah B'ar, w'at you done dream 'bout dis day?' An' dat minnit hit come inter his haid dat he gwine fix 'er den an' dar.

"He stotch hisse'f a li'l lak he wan't quite thu wid his nap an' den he eye 'er up an down an' he say, 'Mis' Tukkey,' sezee, 'you is growed tol'ble plump an' fat, I see, sence you bin stayin' in my house an' quit yo' runnin' up an' down de mountains.'

"Mis' Tukkey kind er snigger an' look down, 'kase she mighty please' ter have him notuss 'er. 'Yassuh,' sez she, 'I b'lieve I is growed mo' plumper dan w'at I wuz.'

"'Yas, *ma'am*! you sho'ly has fat up,' sezee, 'an' now I ax you dis,' sezee, 'ain' I tucken you in my house an' fed you an' gin you shelter, an' ain' you promuss dat you oon look at me 'scusin' w'en I wuz sleepin', an' isn' you done bruk yo' wu'd?'

"Mis' Tukkey she stannin' on one foot lookin' mighty oneasy, an' she say, she do: "'Deed, Mistah B'ar, you mus' 'scuse me dis time, '*deed* you mus', 'kase I kain't he'p hit, '*deed* I kain't.'

"Den he riz up f'um whar he wuz layin' an' he say, way down deep in his th'oad jes' ez growly ez he kin, 'You mus' 'scuse *me*, too, Mis' Tukkey; I kain't he'p *myse'f*, '*deed* I kain't. You ax me w'at is I dream, I tells you I done dream "tukkey," an' you knowin' me

MR. BEAR AND MIS' TURKEY

well 'nuff ter know dat w'en I dream tukkey I 'bleeged ter eat tukkey,' an' wid dat he fell 'pun 'er an' she scuffle some an' de fedders flew'd 'roun' a li'l an' den ev'ything mighty quiet, 'kase she done gone whar she cu'd see de inside er Mistah B'ar stidder de outside. De creeturs whar she bin puttin' on airs wid say hit sarve 'er right fer tryin' ter keep comp'ny wid 'er betters."



"I think that was a real mean old bear to eat her up after she waited on him and did so much for him, don't you, Aunt 'Phrony?" said Janey.

"Laws-a-mussy, chil'," said Aunt 'Phrony, who had had unfortunate matrimonial experiences, "w'en you is ol' ez w'at I is, mebbe you'll fin' out dat ef a man wants

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ter git shed uv a ooman, he ain' gwine think 'bout w'at she been doin' fer 'im, he jes' fergit ev'ything 'ceptin' dat he do wanter git shed uv 'er, dat's 'nuff fer him, an' he don' let dat outen his min' ontwel he done finish de bizness.

"Seem ter me I year yo' maw callin' me, an' I reckon I bes' mosey 'long upstairs ef I 'spec's ter git me any quilt-pieces dis day."

THE TOAD, THE GRASSHOPPER AND THE ROOSTER

Aunt Nancy lived in a little cabin on the edge of the woods, not far from the "big house." The children were not long in finding her whereabouts and in making the acquaintance of her granddaughter, Cassy, an overgrown girl of seventeen, who was just beginning to have what Aunt Nancy called "fool notions" about dress and beaux; and also that of her dog, Bouncer, a lean, hungry and disreputable hound by whom she set much store on account of his pedigree and "p'int's." Just what his valuable points were, no one but Nancy had ever been able to discover, though many a neighbor whose evening meal had been snatched in a twinkling beneath his very eyes could bear witness to points which were considered distinctly undesirable.

The little cabin was scrupulously clean within and held many things which the children had never seen before—the gay patch-work quilts on the beds, the strings of red peppers hanging from the rafters, the curious old salt-gourd, polished and dark as mahogany from years of service. The path and dooryard were swept clean, and at one side was a little garden in which flourished homely old-fashioned flowers, marigold, zinnias, larkspurs, princess' feather, cockscomb and hollyhocks, hardy and gay, needing no coaxing to

AT THE BIG HOUSE

cheer these humble folk with their coarse, bright beauty. Next to Bouncer in Aunt Nancy's affections were her precious "posies"; Cassy had to content herself with third place. The little people fell into the habit of paying frequent visits to this cozy spot, always finding a warm welcome from Aunt Nancy and often getting the treat of a story besides. The first time they visited her she celebrated the occasion by relating certain doings of the toad, the grasshopper and the rooster.

"I reckon dar wan't no mo' livelier creeturs in de ol' times," she began, "dan w'at dem th'ee wuz. Mis' Hoppah-grass, w'icht some un 'em called her 'Mis' Pop-eyes,' 'long er her bulgy eyes, she wuz a gre't darnser, darnse roun' in de grass all day long, an' dar wuz some talk er havin' 'er up befo' de meetin' 'longer her triflin' ways. Toad-frog he spen' all his time gwine huntin' atter bugs an' sech, an' de way he git roun' over de groun' wuz a caution ter snakes. He ain' stop ter walk, jes' natchully lipt up f'um one place an' went ker-swish! thu de air an' lit on de nex' place. I let you know he wuz a soople man in dem days, *dat* he wuz. He wuz a curisome sort er creetur, anyways. Jes' lak de toad-frogs dese days, he had two little bags er white juice right back uv his eyes, an' ef anything got atter 'im er tried ter ketch 'im, he jes' spurted dat juice right out on 'em an' dey wuz glad ter let him 'lone. You kain't 'suade no dog ter tackle a toad, he ain' wanten git dat p'ison sprinkelt on 'im. Toad-frog he wuz p'tickler 'bout his dress, too; git 'im a new suit er clo'es ev'y now an' den, jes' lak de toad-frogs does now. Fus' dey 'mence splittin' up de back an' den dey know hits time ter pull off de ol' clo'es, w'icht dey skins 'em down over der legs jes' lak



THE TOAD AND THE ROOSTER

Mars' Ned do his li'l trousers, an' dey pulls an' hauls, usin' der moufs ter he'p pull, an' w'en de ol' clo'es is off dey rolls 'em up in a bunnel an' jes' natchully swollers 'em, dat dey does; I done seed 'em wid my own eyes.

"Chicken-roostah he wuz a monst'ous fine puffawmer wid his voice; he ain' do much but practuss hit, an' he wuz dat proud he kain't wait fer de daylight, but git up early in the mawnin' an' wake tu'rr folks long 'fo' day singin':

*'Cock-a-doodle-deedle-doo,
I kin sing mo' loud dan you,
Cock-a-deedle-doodle-dee,
Git up an' lissen, folks, ter me!*

"I ain' hatter tell you dat folks wan't likin' 'im any too well, 'kase he alluz 'mence his singin' jes' 'bout de time w'en dey wants ter turn over an' have nu'rr li'l snooge. Sidesen dat, dey think he'z a kin' uv a ol' hypermocerit, 'kase he sa'nter 'long wid Mis' Hen an' de chillens, 'tendin' lak he'z he'pin' scratch fer de livin', an' de on'ies thing he do wuz ter light in, w'en Mis' Hen gin a cackle ter say she done foun' a bug er a wu'm, an' snatch hit way f'um 'er 'fo' she kin say Jack Robumsum.

"Atter w'iles dey git tu'rr creeturs down on 'em, 'long er all der singin' an' darnsin' an' no-kyount, shif'less ways, an' w'en dey see dat, dey think mebbe hit time ter turn over a new leaf an' whu'l in an' 'arn der livin'. So dey git toge'r an' have a confab an' mek up der min's dat dey gwine run a farm in cahoots.





AT THE BIG HOUSE

Roostah he wuz 'p'inted ter be de plow-han', dat 'kase he have sech strong claws jes' fitten fer ter scratch up de groun' wid; Toad-frog he wuz ter be de hoe-han', an' Mis' Hoppah-grass she wuz ter stay home an' do de cookin' an' look atter de house.

"Dey 'vide de 'vidjun er de wu'k dis-a-way fer so long time, an' dey git on mighty well an' wuz might'y please', 'kase de new wan't rub off yit, but pres'n'y Mis' Hoppah-grass she git kind er tired an' lazy, fer she ain' nuver do a lick er work befo' in all her bawn days. She drap de skillit an' fall back in a cheer an' putt her footses on a stool an' tie her haid up in a hank'cher an' say she feelin' so ailified dat she know she in fer a spell er sickness, but dey neenter sen' fer de doctor, 'kase she sho' she gwine die, anyhow, an' she wanter teck her own time to hit an' not be hurried inter de nex' worl' by all dat truck he mek folks swoller. She mought 'z well die easy, she say. She talk 'bout de doctor plumb scannelous, 'kase she ain' want him ter come dar an' let out de news dat de on'ies thing w'at ail her wuz laziness.

"Den she clim' up on de baid an' laid dar groanin' an' kyar'yin on, an' de men-folks stan' roun' an' look at 'er a w'ile, sort er he'pless, an' den dey ses, 'Well, I reckon dar ain' nuttin' we-all kin do,' an' dey g'long off ter wu'k. Roostah he wuz plowin' in a fur fiel' an' Toad-frog he wuz hoein' near de house, so dey 'gree dat he better git dinner. Dat huccome he hatter do de hoein' an' de cookin' an' tidy up de house, let 'lone waitin' on Mis' Hoppah-grass; she fin' sump'n fer 'im ter do ev'y five minnits endurin' er de day.

"Dey kep' hit up dat-a-way ontwel he wuz wo'n ter

THE TOAD AND THE ROOSTER

a frazzle, an' he say he 'bleeged ter have sump'n er ru'rr ter churr him up an' drive de tire away. 'Bout dat time he camed 'cross de rim uv a ol' meal-sifter an' dat putt a notion in his min'. He tucken de rim an' stotch a piece er sheepskin over hit, an' den he got him a piece er fence-rail an' whittle hit down an' fasten hit on de rim. Pres'n'y he fin' a ol' cow-hawn an' he wu'k dat up inter pegs, an' den he git him some cat-gut strings an' stotch 'em 'cross de sifter. Den he screw 'em up wid de cow-hawn pegs 'twel he git 'em in chune an' las' he swipe one han' 'crost de strings, an' suz! she 'mence ter talk, an' 'twuz a sho'-nuff banjer! one'r dem reg'ler ol' plinketty-plunketty nigger banjers whar got mo' git-up-an'-git to 'em, w'en it come to de marter er foot-shakin', 'dan any er dese yer shiny, primp-up banjers whar hangs in de sto' winders an' tries ter git folks ter walk in an' buy 'em. Nigger know better'n dat!

"W'en Mistah Toad-frog git de banjer chune up jes' 'zackly ter suit 'im, he set outside de do' ev'y day w'ile de dinner cookin' an' pick dese yer darnsin' chunes whar mek even chu'ch members feel lak dey jes' nat-chully 'bleeged ter git up an' knock time wid der footses. One day w'ile he wuz pickin', he think he year a soun' er darnsin' on de flo' inside. 'Day er grace!' sezee, 'is my years done trick me, er is dat darnsin'? Kain't be Mis' Hoppah-grass, 'kase she too po'ly. Hit 'bleeged ter *be*, dough, fer she's de on'ies pusson in dar.' He stop playin', darnsin' stop; he go on, darnsin' go on. He putt his year down an' lissen at de banjer ter see ef anything rattle,—banjer she wu'kkin' all right, den he *know* 'twuz Mis' Hoppah-grass. He ain' let on, an' he

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wait on 'er jes' de same, but w'en Chickin-roostah come home, Toad-frog tucken him off a li'l ways an' he say, 'Mistah Roostah, w'en you comes ter dinner to-morrer, don' you git up on de fence an' crow lak you bin doin' ter lemme know hit's time ter dish up de vittles; stidder dat, you creep up sof'ly w'iles I pick, an' peek in thu de do'.'

"'Well, befo' de king!' sez de Roostah, sezee, 'wa't's in de win' now, Mistah Toad-frog?'

"'Nemmine,' sez de Toad-frog, 'you g'long an' do lak I tells you, an' I boun' you see a sight fer sore eyes.'



"So de nex' day w'en Roostah come home ter dinner, stidder crowin' ter say he be dar soon, he crope up ter de do' an' peeked in thu de crack w'ile Toad-frog pick de banjer 'twel she plumb talk, an' wish't I mought die!

THE TOAD AND THE ROOSTER

ef dar wan't Mis' Hoppah-grass, darnsin' roun' de room jes' ez well 'ez she uver wuz. She caper *an'* she twis' *an'* she turn *an'* she do de back-step *an'* cut de pigeon-wing *an'* wound up wid de double-shuffle. Las' uv all she lipt up *an'* cracked her heels toge'rr *an'* spun clean roun' in de air befo' she lit on her footses.

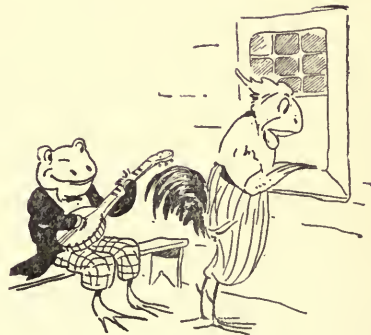
"Roostah ain' sayin' nuttin', he jes' beckon ter Toad-frog. He nuver stop pickin', but tiptoed ter de do' *an'* cut one eye thu de crack, *an'* got dar in time ter see 'er do de high-jump. Dey wuz dat outdone dey kain't say nuttin', jes' hunch one nu'rr wid der elbers. Den Toad-frog fell back on de bench *an'* went on pickin', *an'* Roostah he go *an'* git up on de bench *an'* crow lak he alluz do jes' befo' dinner.

"W'en she year 'im crow, Mis' Hoppah-grass lipt back in baid *an'* drord up de kivers *an'* done lak she ain' kin move han' er foot. Den Roostah walk in *an'* come up to'des de baid *an'* he say, sezee, 'Wellum, how you come on dis mawnin'?"

"She wuz pantin' so f'um de darnsin' dat she sca'cely kin git her bref, so she roll her eyes up in her haid *an'* say, 'So po'ly, sca'ce kin talk.'

"'Dat 'ar's a burnin' fib!' sezee. 'I boun' you I mek you git up f'um dat *an'* walk, Mis' Pop-eyes!' sezee.

"She jump outen de baid *an'* mek fer de do', *an'* Roostah he lit out atter her, *an'* dey sut'n'y had it den, fer she wuz a sho'-nuff jumper *an'* he wuz one'r dese yer shawt-legged mens whar do lak dey gwine fall all over deyse'fs w'en dey runs fas'. Dey went stavin' thu de yard *an'* over de fence *an'* 'crost a fiel' *an'* den back ergin, *an'* he nigh mos' chase 'er down de well. Den she mek fer de grass *an'* think she gwine hide 'way



AT THE BIG HOUSE

f'um him dar, but he putt on a big bus' er speed an' kotched an' et her jes' ez she wuz slippin' inter de grass.

"I reckon y'all done seed de chicken-roostahs chasin' de hoppah-grasses befo' now, an' dish yer I been tellin' you is de reason dey does so. Dey ain' fergit her 'ceitfulness, an' seem lak dey jes' natchully kain't leave a hoppah-grass 'lone w'en dey sees 'er, boun' ter run her down er die."

MR. HARE TRIES TO GET A WIFE

One day the children's mother told them that she was going to spend a few days at a plantation some miles away, taking with her Aunt Nancy, who was anxious to pay a little visit to a daughter living in that neighborhood. Aunt 'Phrony, she told them, had promised to come and look after them during her absence.

"Oh please, mamma," they begged, "let Aunt 'Phrony take us nutting? She told us one day that she knew where there were just lots and lots of walnuts." So it was arranged that they should take a luncheon with them and make a day of it, Aunt 'Phrony being perfectly willing, for her Indian blood showed itself not only in her appearance, but in her love for a free out-of-door life, and her fondness for tramping. She would readily give up a day's work at any time to discharge some wholly insignificant errand which involved a walk of many miles.

The day was a bright and beautiful one in October, warm, yet with a faint nip of last night's frost lingering in the air. They made a fine little procession through the woods, Aunt 'Phrony leading, followed by children, a dorky with baskets, her grandson "Wi'yum," and lastly the dogs, frisking and frolicking and darting away every now and then in pursuit of small game. A very weary and hungry little party gathered about the baskets at

AT THE BIG HOUSE

one o'clock, and three little pairs of white hands were stained almost as brown as those of Aunt 'Phrony and William. But everybody was happy, and there was a nice pile of walnuts to go back in the large bag which William had brought for the purpose. The dogs sat around and looked longingly on, a squirrel frisked hastily across a log near by, the birds chattered in the trees high above and looked curiously down on the intruders, and presently a foolish hare went scurrying across the path, so near the dogs that they sat still, amazed at his presumption, and forbore to chase him.

"Hi! there goes 'ol' Hyar'!" shouted Ned; "I'm going to see if I can't catch him." But he soon gave up the hopeless chase.

"Was that your 'ol' Hyar'," Aunt 'Phrony; your ol' Hyar' you tell us all about?" asked little Kit.

"Bless de chil'!" said she. "Naw, 'twuz de ol', ol' Hyar' I done tol' you 'bout, de gre't-gre't-gre't-sump'n-ru'rr grandaddy er dis one, I reckon."

"Aunt 'Phrony," said Janey, "couldn't you tell us some more about the old hare while we sit here and get rested?"

"Now de laws-a-mussy," said 'Phrony, "ef we gwine 'mence on de ol' tales I reckon I mought ez well mek up my min' ter spen' de res' er de day right yer on dis spot," and she leaned back against a pine tree and closed her eyes resignedly. Presently she opened them to ask, "Is I uver tol' you 'bout de time Mistah Hyar' try ter git him a wife? I isn'? Well, den, dat de one I gwine gin you dis trip. Hit happen dis-a-way: Hyar' he bin flyin' all 'roun' de kyountry fer right long time, frolickin' an' cuttin' up, jes' a no-kyount bachelder,

MR. HARE TRIES TO GET A WIFE

an' las' he git kind er tired uv hit, an' he see all tu'rr creeturs gittin' ma'ied an' he tucken hit inter his haid dat 'twuz time he sottle down an' git him a wife; so he primp hisse'f up an' slick his hya'r down wid b'argrease an' stick a raid hank'cher in his ves'-pocket an' pick him a button-hole f'um a lady's gyarden, an' den he go co'tin' dis gal an' dat gal an' tu'rr gal. He 'mence wid de good-lookin' ones an' wind up wid de ugly ones, but 'twan't nair' one dat 'ud lissen to 'im, 'kase he done done so many mean tricks an' wuz sech a hyarum-skyarum dat dey wuz all 'feard ter tek up wid 'im, an' so dey shet de do' in his face w'en he git ter talkin' sparky, dough dar wan't no pusson cu'd do dat sort er talkin' mo' slicker 'n w'at he cu'd. But he done gin de creeturs jes' li'l too much 'havishness, so 'twan't no use.

"He think de marter all over an' he say ter hisse'f: 'Dem fool gals dunno w'at dey missin', but ef dey s'pose I gwine gin up an' stay single, dey done fool derse'fs dis time. I ain' gwine squatulate wid 'em ner argyfy ner beg no mo', but I gwine whu'l right in an' do sump'n.'

"Atter he study a w'ile he slap one han' on his knee, an' he 'low, he do: 'Dat's de ticket! dat's de ticket! I reckon dey'll fin' ol' man Hyar' ain' sech a fool ez he looks ter be, atter all.'

"He go lopin' all roun', leavin' wu'd at ev'y house in de kyountry dat a big meetin' bin hilt an' a law passed dat ev'yb'dy gotter git ma'ied, young an' ol', rich an' po', high an' low. He say ter hisse'f, '*Ev'yb'dy*, dat mean me, too, so dish yer whar I boun' ter git me a wife.'



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"De creeturs place der 'pennance on him, dough he done tucken 'em in so often, an' on de 'pinted day dey met toge'rr; de gals all dress' up in der Sunday clo'es an' de mens fixed up mighty sprucey, an' sech a pickin' an' choosin' you nuver see in all yo' bawn days. De gals dey all stan' up in line an' de men go struttin' mighty biggitty up an' down befo' 'em, showin' off an' makin' manners an' sayin', 'Howdy, ladiz, howdy, howdy!' An' de gals dey'd giggle an' twis' an' putt a finger in de cornders er der moufs, an' w'en a man step up ter one uv 'em ter choose her out, she'd fetch 'im a li'l tap an' say, 'Hysh! g'way f'um yer, man! better lemme 'lone!' an' den she'd giggle an' snicker some mo', but I let you know she wuz sho' ter go wid him in de een'.

"All dis time Hyar' wuz gwine up an' down de line, bowin' an' scrapin' an' tryin' ter mek hisse'f 'greeable ter ev'yb'dy, even de daddies an' de mammies er de gals, whar wuz lookin' on f'um tu'rr side. Dar wuz whar he miss hit, 'kase w'ile he wuz talkin' ter de mammy uv a mighty likely li'l gal whar he think 'bout choosin', lo an' beholst, de choosin' wuz all over, an' w'en Mistah Hyar' turnt roun' dar want nair' a gal lef', an' ev'y man have a wife asseptin' him.

"Den dey hilt a big darnsin' an' feastin', an' ev'yb'dy wuz happy an' in a monst'ous good humor, de gals 'kase dey done got ma'ied, an' de paws an' de maws 'kase dey done got redd er de gals,—ev'yb'dy 'scusin' Hyar'. Dey mek lots er game uv 'im, an' w'en dey darnse pas', dey sings out: 'Heyo! Mistah Hyar', huccome you ain' darnse?' 'Bring yo' wife, ol' man, an' jine in de fun!' 'Hi! yi! Mistah Hyar', you done ma'y off ev'yb'dy else an' stay single yo'se'f? Well, dat de meanes' trick you





Mistah Hyar' Wuz Gwine Up An' Down De Line

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done played us yit! 'tain' fair!' An' dey snicker an' run on 'twel Hyar' wish he ain' nuver year de wu'd ma'y.

"Atter wile dey got tired er darnsin' an' tucken der new wifes an' went off home leavin' Hyar' all by hisse'f, an' I tell you he feel right lonesome. He git a bad spell er de low-downs an' go squanderin' roun' thu de woods wid his years drapt an' his paws hangin' limp, studyin' how he kin git revengemint. Las' he pull hisse'f toge'rr an' he say: 'Come, Hyar', dis ain' gwine do. Is you done fool ev'yb'dy all dese 'ears an' den let yo'se'f git fooled by a passel er gals? Naw, suh! I knows w'at I gwine do dis ve'y minnit. Ef I kain't git me a gal, I kin git me a widdy, an' some folks laks dem de bes', anyhow. Ef you ma'y a widdy, she got some er de foolishness knock' outen her befo' you hatter tek her in han'."

"Wid dat he step out ez gaily ez you please. He go an' knock at de do' uv ev'y house, an' w'en de folks come ter de do' dey say, 'W'y, howdy, Mistah Hyar', whar you bin keepin' yo'se'f all dis time?' He say, he do: 'Oh, I bin tendin' ter de 'fairs er de kyountry, an' I is sont unter you ez a messenger. I is saw'y ter tell you dey done hilt nu'rr big meetin' an' mek up der min's de worl' gittin' too many creeturs in hit, so dey pass de law dat dar mus' be a big battle, an' you is all ter meet toge'rr at de 'pinted time, an' each man mus' fall 'pun de man nex' him an' try fer ter kill 'im."

"De creeturs assept dis wid submissitty, dey ain' 'spicion Hyar' 't all. On de 'pinted day dey met toge'rr, an' each wuz raidy ter defen' hisse'f. Hyar' wuz dar lak all de res', an' ef you'd 'a seed all de spears an' bows an' arrers he kyarry, an' all de knifes stickin' in his



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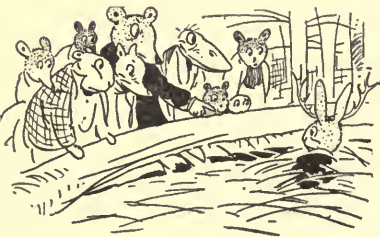
belt, you'd 'a thought he wuz de bigges' fighter dar. But sho! W'en de fightin' begin, hit wuz far'-you-well, gentermans! 'Twan't no Hyar' dar; he jes' putt out tight 'z he kin go. W'en dey see him goin' dey sing out: 'Hi, dar! Mistah Hyar'! Whar you gwine? Whyn't you stay wid we-all an' fight dis out?'

"Hyar' ain' stop ter talk, he jes' look roun' over his shoulder w'iles he 'z runnin' an' he say, sezee: 'De man I wanster kill, he done runned 'way an' I'se atter him, hot-foot, de mis'able cowerd. Kain't stop ter talk; git outen my way, ev'yb'dy,

*'Cle'r de track, fer yer me comin',
I'se ol' Buster whar keep things hummin'.'*

"W'en de battle wuz over, de creeturs miss Hyar', an' dey say he mus' be 'mong's de kilt, so dey go roun' lookin' at de daid, but 'twan't no Hyar' dar. Dey hunt ev'ywhar fer him an' las' dey foun' him squattin' in de bresh, tremlin' ez ef he have de ager an' nigh mos' skeert ter def'. Dey drug him outen dat an' dey ses: 'So dish yer's Buster whar keep things hummin'! Well, we gwine mek you hum dis time, sho' 'nuff. You putts we-all ter fightin' an' gits heap er good men kilt off, an' yer *you* settin' tuck 'way safe in de bresh. We gwine hole you 'sponsible fer dis, an' we gotter know de whar-fo's, too.'

"Den ol' Hyar' he up an' 'fess he done de hull bizness so's't de kyouuntry mought be full er widdies an' he git him his pick fer a wife, fer he 'lowed widdies wan't gwine be so p'tickler ez de gals. De creeturs jes' nat-chully hilt up der han's at him, dey wuz plumb outdone.



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'De owdacious vilyun!' dey ses, 'we boun' ter exescoot him on de spot an' git shed uv 'im onct fer all.' But he baig mighty hard an' some uv 'em think he be wuss punish ef dey jes' gins 'im a good hidin' an' lets 'im live on alone, a mis'able ol' bachelder, widout no pusson ter tek notuss uv 'im, 'kase in co'se none er de widdies wuz gwine ma'y a cowerd."

"Why, Aunt 'Phrony," said Ned, "he must have found a wife at last, for how about Mis' Molly Hyar'?"

"Shucks!" said she, "is *I* uver tol' you 'bout Mis' Molly Hyar'? Naw, suh, she b'longs in dem ol' nigger tales whar Nancy tells you. De Injun tales ain' say nuttin' 'bout no wife er his'n. He wuz too gre't a fighter an' too full er 'havishness uver ter settle down wid a wife; an' now lemme finish de tale.

"Dey gin him a turr'ble trouncin' an' den turnt him aloose, an' stidder gittin' him a wife he got him a hide dat smart f'um haid ter heels; but w'en my daddy tell dat tale he useter een' her up dis-a-way, 'An' mebbe Hyar' git de bes' uv 'em, atter all, 'kase w'en you git a hidin', de smart's soon over, but w'en you git a wife, de mis'ry done come ter stay.' "

HOW MR. HARE LOST HIS HORNS

"Well, I say!" said Ned, when Aunt 'Phrony had finished telling of Mr. Hare's failure to get a wife, "who'd think such a little old thing as a hare could make so much mischief?"

"Li'l ol' thing! him? not in dem days, chil'," said the old woman. "Ain' I tol' you, tu'rr night, dat de creeturs wan't lak dey is now? W'y, Hyar' he wuz a big man, I tell you, an' he had hawns; yas *hawns*, *sho'-nuff* hawns, jes' lak de deers has. 'Deed, de deer-hawns useter b'long on his haid, 'twel tu'rr creeturs done tucken 'em 'way f'um 'im. I gwine tell you 'bout dat ef you promuss not ter pester me 'bout no mo' tales fer one w'ile."

Of course the children promised, and the old woman, with head thrown back against the tree and a dreamy look in her eyes, as if she were contemplating those far-off days when the hare was the great hero of many a tale told by the camp-fires of her father's people, began the story of the lost horns.

"I done tol' you," she commenced, "dat Hyar' useter wear hawns, an' dis huccome he ter lose 'em. At fus' he ain' have none, but he git ter be sech a big man an' sech a smart man dat de creeturs look up ter him might'ly, an' dey wanten do sump'n ter show der regyards uv 'im, 'kase dish yer wuz befo' he git so trickish;

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so dey have w'at dey call a kyouncil an' talk hit all over an' agree ter gin him a harnsum pair er hawns, thinkin' dat sech a smart creetur boun' ter mek good use uv 'em. So dey call him up an' dey ses, 'Mistah Hyar', we done 'cide ter putt dese hawns on you, an' we wants you ter 'member dat we nuver putts 'em on any but tiptop men an' natchel-bawn runners, an' we 'specs you ter keep up yo' good name in dis marter. Now lessee w'at you kin do wid 'em.'

"Dey gin him de wu'd an' 'way he went, but mebbe de hawns mek 'im feel sort er onbalance in de haid er somehows outer kelter, 'kase stidder runnin' lak he useter he went wid a sort er hop, skip an' jump, an' in de place er gwine up an' down de medders whar him an' Mistah Dapple-deer useter kite roun' toge'rr, mighty good fren's, he jes' tucken ter de bresh an' dey ain' see him no mo' fer so long time.

"De creeturs say ter one nu'rr, 'W'at in de name er goodness done comed over Mistah Hyar'? He useter live out in de open 'long wid Mistah Deer, 'havin' hisse'f lak a 'sponsible pusson, an' now he done quit we-all, an' lawd on'y knows whar he is at. Look-a-yer, Mistah Dapple-deer, we gwine 'p'int you ter hunt up yo' fren' an' bring 'im back ter dis kyouncil. Kin we 'pend on you fer dis, suh?'

"Deer he say: 'Well, I ain' mek no promuss; dat ain' my way. Makin' an' breakin' is bofe pow'ful easy; but ef I sesso, den I gwine do so, an' I say dis much: I gwine do w'at I kin, but mebbe you has notuss dat *folks* is 'bout de mos' onsu't'n truck w'at dey is; I mought arnser fer Mistah Hyar' yist'd'y, but I kain't tell w'at he gwine do to-morrer.'



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"Well, suh, he go an' he hunt an' he hunt an' he hunt. Fus' he look in de medders, no Mistah Hyar'; den he look in de woods, no Mistah Hyar'; den he tuck ter lookin' in de bresh, an' dar he wuz, settin' up on his 'hime laigs an' gnorrin' a locus' twig, jes' ez onconsarn' ez ef he bin livin' dar all his life."

Ned interrupted to say, "What in the world did he want to gnaw a locust twig for?"

"Oh, dat wuz fer his front toofs. He teck a twig er de black locus', 'kase dat good an' hard, an' he gnor an' he gnor, ter keep his front toofs groun' down; fer ef he ain' do dat dey'd grow so long he cu'dden use 'em, 'deed dey would. Well, he wuz grindin' way on de twig an' he year Deer comin' an' he say, 'Howdy, Mistah Dapple-deer, howdy,' widout even so much ez turnin' his haid.

"Well, uv all de news!' sez Deer, sezee, 'w'at you doin' yer so fur f'um de place whar you b'longs ter?"

"'Jes' gittin' my toofs in good fix,' sezee, gnorrin' on ez ef he nuver 'spec' ter git nu'rr locus' twig.

"'Come 'long outen yer,' sez Deer, 'dis no place fer a man er yo' breens an' unnerstannin'; come out yer in de open an' show yo'se'f. W'at mek you wanter skulk an' hide yo'se'f in de bresh?"

"'Tired er de open,' sez Hyar', sezee, 'tired er runnin' races; tired er gwine all 'roun' creashun ter fin' vittles. Gwine stay right in yer whar I kin fin' 'em handy; gwine teck things easy f'um dis on. Ef dese yer breens er mine whar you talk 'bout is good fer anything, dey tell me dat w'uk don' 'gree wid me, nohow.'

"Deer he 'suade an' he 'suade, but 'twan't no use, an' las' Hyar' git kind er riley an' he say, he do: 'Don' you



“Howdy, Mistah Dapple-Deer, Howdy !”

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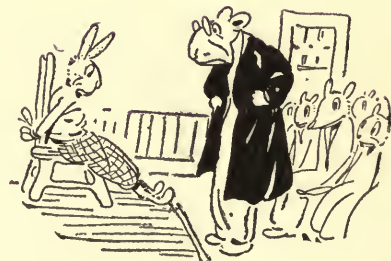
'suade me no mo'. My min' done mek up. You better lemme 'lone, 'kase now I got me dese hawns I is kind er dangersome, an' you bes' not git in a fist-an'-skull fight wid me, 'kase ders no tellin' whar you mought bring up, on de p'int er dese hawns, I dunno; I ain' 'sponsible fer 'em,' an' wid dat he shuk de hawns servigrous at po' ol' Deer.

"Well, ef dat ain' de gre'tes' howdy-do!" sez Deer, sezee. 'An' dish yer wuz de man I done place my 'penance on an' think wuz my fren'! Nemmine, g'long an' do de way you wanster; I done wash my han's er de bizness. De fool-killer better come dis 'way, dough, right quick, 'kase dars a good size job waitin' fer him right close ter dese diggin's, an' I jes' 'bout b'lieve I gwine leave wu'd fer him whar ter call, ez I g'long back.'

"Wid dat he sa'nter off a li'l ways, thinkin' mebbe Hyar' gwine foller. Naw suh! he jes' sot dar an' went on gnorrin'. W'en Deer see dat, he succele 'roun' thu de woods a piece an' come up behime ol' Hyar' an' grab 'im back er de hawns an' go lopin' off wid 'im ter de kyouncil.

"'Set down de pris'ner,' dey ses ter Mistah Deer. Deer putt him down an' he sot dar jes' ez ca'm ez you please, still gnorrin' on a li'l locus' twig he bringed wid 'im. 'Mawnin',' sezee, 'gemmen, mawnin'. Hope I sees y'all right well. Y'all lookin' tol'ble, hope you feelin' dat-a-way, dough "look" an' "feel" 'spute wid one nu'rr mighty often in dis worl'. Yer me, all stove up wid de rheumatiz, dough I 'spec' you oon b'lieve hit jes' ter look at me.'

"De kyouncil ain' pay no 'tention ter his gwines-on.



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'Pris'ner, has you anything ter say fer yo'se'f?' dey ax 'im.

"'Plenty,' sezee, cool ez a cowcumber, 'did any pusson uver see de time w'en I kain't wag my tongue wid de bes'? But ef you mean 'bout dem hawns, I ain' got nair' wu'd ter say, 'ceptin' dat you done putt 'em on me too suddintly. Seem like dey kind er goes ter my haid an' mek me wanter do diff'nt f'um w'at I uver has befo'. Y'all 'd orter let dem hawns grow on me, li'l at a time, so's't I moughter got use' to 'em.' Den he set back on his ha'nches an' look lak 'twan't none er his bizness an' he wan't kyarin' w'at dey done wid 'im.

"De kyouncil lean der haid on der han's an' study 'bout de marter, an' las' dey ses, 'Mebbe we done mek too much has'e in dis bizness, so we ain' gwine be too hard on you, but we p'intedly ses ter you dat you kain't keep dem hawns; we 'bleeged ter teck 'em 'way f'um you an' gin 'em ter some pusson dat gwine mek good use uv 'em.'

"Ol' Hyar' he say, sezee: 'Gemmen, dat suit me to a hya'r, 'kase dey is too big fer dis chil' an' mek him feel kind er top-haivy.'

"So dey ondone 'em offen Hyar', an' den dey call up Deer an' ses, 'Mistah Dapple-deer, you done stuck by de kyouncil an' you done done yo' juty in the place whar we putt you an' you has foun' Mistah Hyar' an' bringed him back ter we-all, an' so now we gwine gin you dese hawns fer de reward er yo' sarvices.'

"So Deer he go tippin' up an' kneel down an' dey fasten de hawns on 'im. Um-umph! No sooner done dan he scrabble ter his footses an' gin a boun' an' went jumpin' off inter de bresh, an' dar whar he bin livin'



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uver sence. Onct in a wiles you kin see him cross de open, but he do hit in a mighty big hurry, I tell you, jes' two er th'ee monst'ous jumps an' he git clean 'cross a big fiel', an' even den he sca'cely uver cross lessen de dogs is atter 'im, an' he ain' see no urr way ter git outen dey road.

"Hyar' he squat dar an' look atter Mistah Deer, an' he laugh an' he laugh, *an'* he laugh 'twel he fall over an' roll on de groun'. Den de kyouncil dey ses, 'Mistah Hyar', we wants you ter set up, suh, an' quit dis 'havishness; dar ain' nuttin' ter laugh 'bout in dis bizness, 'kase de kyouncil done los' nu'rr good member.' Ol' Hyar' he set up an' he bow an' he scrape an' he say, he do, ' 'Scuse me, gemmen, but I hatter laugh w'en I think 'bout de effec' er dem hawns on sech a well behave' pusion ez Dapple-deer. Dish yer gwine l'arn y'all, I reckon, dat 'tain' safe ter pile up de honors on a man's haid too suddintly, dey kain't stan' hit. Y'all please 'scuse me ef I run 'long atter Dapple-deer, 'kase I done had a tas'e er livin' in de bresh an' you mus'n' 'spec ter see me often out yer in de open. So long, gemmen, so long!' He run off inter de bresh an' stay dar, befo' dey kin say Jack Robumsum, an' dat w'at all de hyar's bin doin' uver sence."



WHY THE TITMOUSE HAS A BLUNT TONGUE

The children sat perfectly quiet after Aunt 'Phrony had finished telling them about how Mr. Hare lost his horns, for they remembered that they had promised not to "pester" for more. But the story-teller was in an amiable mood, and, without solicitation, went on to relate another tale, in which Mr. Hare figured again.

"Onct," she said, "ol' Hyar' wuz livin' 'way off in de mountains, so high up dat he cu'd look out over de kyountry an' see ev'ything an' know jes' 'zackly w'en anything wuz gwine on. Ev'y time he seed a big smoke he knowed a fire bin built an' dat sump'n er nu'rr wuz in de wind, so he 'ud jes' light out fer de place, an' w'en he git dar he alluz start up some trouble er ru'rr.

"One time dar wuz a heap er sickness 'mong's' de people, an' so dey went ter wu'k an' had a medincin'-darnse."

The little folks wanted to know what a medicine dance might be.

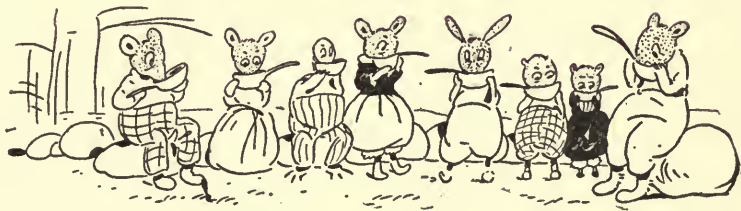
"Oh, honeys!" Aunt 'Phrony exclaimed, "I tell you a medincin'-darnse wuz one big time, dat hit wuz! My daddy done tol' me all 'bout hit. Dey mos' in gin'ly hilt de darnse in de fall, dem Injun folks, but sometimes 'twuz in de spring, an' ef dar wuz any dese yer ketchin' diseases 'roun', dey hilt hit mos' any time ter keep off de sickness. My daddy's people b'lieve ev'ything dat

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grows got some use in sickness. Dey ses dat long, long time ago de anermuels got toge'rr an' made up der min's dat dar wuz too many mens in de worl', so dey putt der haid toge'rr and got up a pow'ful lot er diseases fer ter kill off de people. Den all de growin' things, w'en dey got de news er dis, dey ses, 'We-all is de fren's er men, we gwine gin 'em w'at he'p we kin in dis marter.' So each er de trees an' de bushes an' de yarbs an' de grasses an' de mosses dey 'greed ter gin a kyore fer some one'r de diseases de anermuels done brung 'pun de people. An' de people got so dat dey knowed 'bout dese kyores, an' dat huccome dey have de medincin'-darnse.

"I done tol' you 'twuz a mighty big time. De medincin' men dey'd ga'rr de yarbs an' git de medincin' raidy, an' den de leader he'd git up an' sing sump'n at de res' er de medincin' men, an' den dey'd 'spon' back at 'im wid some mo' singin'. Dey'd keep hit up dat-a-way a w'ile an' den de darnse wuz hilt. An' all de time hit wuz gwine on de people wuz drinkin' de medincin'. Hit wuz pass' roun' to 'em wid seven dippers in each mess er de medincin', an' ev'y pusson 'bleeged ter teck some. Dey kep' de darnse up fo' days, an' de fo'th day dey hatter go widout eatin' all day long. W'ensomuver dey have de medincin'-darnse dey alluz foller hit up wid de eagle-darnse an' de pigeon-darnse, an' each un 'em las' fo' days. In de eagle-darnse dey use de eagle-fedders, an' daddy say 'twuz a fine sight, all dem eagle-fedders, each un 'em tip' off wid a li'l bit er fur f'um de deer's tail. Dem wuz gran' times, I tell you!

"Well, I done tol' you dar wuz a lot er sickness an' de people wuz holdin' one'r dem medincin'-darnses, an' ol' Hyar' off up in de mountains see de smoke er de



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fires an' come down ter jine in de fun. W'en he fin' out 'bout de sickness, hit come inter his min' ter play doctah, so he go roun' sayin' he wuz a gre't medincin' man an' axin' folks ter putt out der tongues. He'd say,



'Come yer, suh, an' putt out yo' tongue, fur 'z you kin, don' be 'shame' er de lenk uv hit, 'tain' ev'yb'dy got sech a good swollerer ez dat.' Den he'd come a li'l closter an' teck de tongue in his han' an' say, 'Sho! sho! yo' tongue mighty coated, suh. 'Pears lak yo' stummick kain't be wu'kkin' lak she orter; lessee 'bout dis.' Wid

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dat he'd gin de tongue a snatch dat pull her clean out by de roots. He kilt two er th'ee pussons dat-a-way an' den tucken hisse'f off an' hid in de big mountains whar dey kain't fin' him.

"De people dey wuz plumb outdone, so dey hilt a kyouncil an' mek up der min's dey wuz gwine ketch 'im an' fix him so's't de fus' thing he knowed he oon know nuttin'. Dey say, 'De bes' way ter git 'im down f'um de mountains be ter build a fire,' so dey all got toge'rr an' built a monst'ous big fire, fus' lightwood an' den bresh an' den logs, an' dey kep' pilin' her up an' pilin' her up 'twel you cu'd see de light fer miles. Dat fotched 'im. But he wuz too smart an' too skittish not ter know dey wuz layin' fer 'im, so he tucken his medjures 'cordin'. He have de power ter turn hisse'f inter mos' anything he wanten, so he jes' tucken de shape uv a b'ar an' come scrunchin' 'long an' squat down by de fire. De people wuz hid off in de bresh wid der bows an' arrers, but w'en dey see 'twan't nuttin' but a b'ar dey ses, 'We ain' have no qu'oil wid Mistah B'ar. Jes' we let him 'lone an' save ow' arrers fer dat mis'able ol' Hyar.' So dey done dat, an' Hyar' he sot dar an' sot dar, sort er darin' 'em ter come on, but dey ain' 'spicion nuttin' an' atter w'ile he got tired an' moseyed 'long back ter de mountains leavin' 'em settin' dar watchin' an' layin' fer 'im.

"Dey kep' on buildin' fires an' he kep' on comin' an' settin' by 'em, fus' in one shape an' den in anu'rr 'twel las' de people 'gun ter see thu de dodge an' dey ses, 'Well, suh, de fool-killer orter come 'long yer an' 'tend ter we-all, we sut'n'y has ac' lak plumb ijits, lettin' dat ol' rapskallion come yer night atter night an' set by de



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fire an' wo'm hisse'f an' do lak he own de place. We ain' got no sense 't all er we'd a knowed 'twan't nob'dy else in de worl'. I boun' you he bin havin' a good laugh 'bout us wid de nabers w'en he got home. 'Twon't do ter let dis run on no longer, fer ef we does, he sho' ter git we-all inter hot water somehow er nu'rr. Now de on'ies way we kin mek sho' 'bout dis is jes' ter set back in de bresh an' let fly at any creetur whar come an' squat hisse'f by dat fire. We mus' jes' s'roun' de fire an' let de arrers zip him f'um ev'y side.'

"Den dey went ter wu'k an' sont noration all thu de kyountry dat ev'y pusson whar kin hannle a bow an' arrer mus' come ter de meetin' dat night, even de li'l boys wuz ter jine in. All dat day de men an' de boys wuz keepin' der han's in, shootin' at marks, an' de wimmins an' de chillen wuz bringin' de bresh an' de wood an' pilin' hit high fer de fire. Soon ez 'twuz dark dey lit 'er, an' my! how she blaze! I reckon you nuver seed no sech a fire ez dat wuz. Dar wan't no wind, an' de flame she jes' went a shootin' up in de air, an' ol' Hyar' he see hit, 'way off in de mountains, an' he rub his han's toge'rr an' he say, sezee, 'Nabers, I kain't stay home dis night, I tell you dat, p'in'-blank. Dars some kind er shindig gwine on down dar, by de lookin's er dat fire, an' I'se 'bleeged ter know w'at 'tis an' mebbe tek a han' in hit.'

"De nabers dey say, 'Yas, reckon 'twon't do fer you ter stay home one night, some 'un might 'spicion dat you wuz a decent, sotted sort er pusson ef you done dat. Bes' g'long an' keep up de name you done mek fer yo'se'f.'

"Sezee ter hisse'f, 'Dog-my-cats ef I kyare,' an' wid

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dat he riz up in his tracks an' putt out fer de low groun's so fas' dat he sca'cely touch' groun' betwix' jumps.

"Jes' befo' he got dar he tuck an' change hisse'f inter nu'rr shape an' went r'arin' an' chargin' up ter de fire lak he wuz pow'ful big an' empawtant. De people come mighty nigh bein' tuck in by him ag'in, but de leader gin de signal an' dey close in on 'im, whoopin' an' yellin', an' ketched him jes' ez he wuz tryin' ter slip inter de bresh. No sooner is dey tetch 'im dan he turnt back inter his own shape, an' dey ses, 'Uh-huh, now we foun' you, suh, an' finders is keepers, you done yearn dat all yo' life. Neenter kick, suh, we ain' min' dat. No use ter thump de groun' wid yo' behime foot, neener, 'kase der ain' none er yo' folks widin call.'

"Wid dat dey drug him 'way an' tied him to a saplin'. Den dey all stood off an' tuck aim an' de arrers jes' come a-whizzin' thu de air, zippety-zip, an' struck ol' Hyar' mos' ev'y time. He wuz too big a cunjerer ter be 'feard er dem li'l ol' arrers, so he jes' stood dar laughin'. W'en a arrer struck him hit 'ud jes' glance off widout hu'tin' him an' he do lak a flea bin an' bit him. Sezee, 'Um-umph! is dat nu'rr flea done bit me? 'Pears lak I got a mighty big crap er fleas dis season, keep me pow'ful busy; 'scuse me, gemmen, ef I ain' ez mannerly ez w'at I mos' in gin'ly is, dough I kin do dis an' lissen at you, too, at one an' de same time.'

"He wunk one eye at 'em an' wuz dat peart an' sassy dat de people fair' foam at de mouf an' dey say, 'Dish yers a sho'-nuff cunjerer an' 'tain' no use ow' tryin' ter kill 'im by owse'fs. Le's we send off ter one'r ow' med-incin' men an' ax 'im w'at we bes' do ter kill dis owda-cious creetur.'

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"Dey kep' him tied up ter de tree an' sont off ter de medincin' man, an' he say, 'Go back an' tell 'em ter shoot him in de haid.' So dey all tuck der bows an arrers an' aimed at de haid. Bless goodness, 'twuz wuss dan befo'. Hyar' jes' stood dar an' nuver even wunk his eyeleds ner twitched his whiskers, an' de arrers dey jes' fell off lak water f'um a duck's back. Dey seed 'twan't no use keepin' dat up, so dey sont off ter de medincin' man ag'in an' ax him fer ter please putt his min' ter wu'k an' he'p 'em outer der fix, 'kase ol' Hyar' ain' daid yit ner showin' nair' sign er dyin', an' he 'bleeged ter git way f'um 'em an' do a lot er meanness yit ef dey kain't kill 'im.

"De medincin' man study fer a w'ile an' den he say, 'Well, you-all go back an' tell 'em I say dat de on'ies' way dey kin kill dat creetur is ter shoot him in de paw, dey kin try f'um now 'twel nuver an' dey kain't do hit no way but dat, an' dey neenter try.'

"Dey went back an' kyar'd de wu'd, an' all de men an' boys got der bows an' arrers raidy ag'in an' de leader gin de wu'd, 'Go!' Dey all p'inted der arrers at ol' man Hyar' an' let 'em fly toge'rr, an' Hyar' he knowed dat his time done come, but I tell you he died right game, sassy ter de ve'y las', axin' 'em w'y dey ain' think er doin' dat-a-way sooner.

"Atter he wuz daid an' dey see how easy 'twuz ter kill 'im, dey git kind er mad 'kase dey ain' do hit sooner, an' dey ses, 'Now, w'y in de name er common sense did dat medincin' man putt us on de wrong track, tellin' us ter shoot ol' Hyar' in de haid, w'y ain' he tol' us ter shoot him in de paw?'

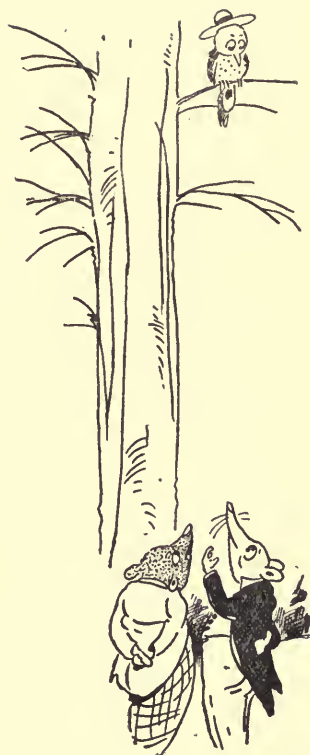
"De mo' dey thought 'bout hit de madder dey got,

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an' las' dey ses, 'Dat wuz a mighty 'ceitful, low-down trick, an' seem lak we orter punish 'im fer dat, 'kase ef we lets hit go, he 'll git so we kain't putt no 'pennance on him 't all an' he ain' be no kind er he'p ter we-all.'

"De medincin' man he wuz neener mo' ner less dan de li'l bu'd whar we calls de 'chick-a-dee.' De Injuns calls him 'Chick-a-lee-lee,' w'ich soun' mighty nigh de same. Dey go off an' fin' him settin' up on a branch, an' call him down an' ax him w'at do he mean by bein so 'ceitful an' puttin' 'em on de wrong track. He ain' have nair' wu'd ter say fer hisse'f, dough mos' in gin'l he wuz right talky. He jes' hang his li'l haid an' look at 'em ouden de cornder uv his eye. I 'spec' dey moughter kilt 'im ef he 'd gin 'em any sass, but 'kase he ac' lak he wuz saw'y dey oon do dat. Dey ses, 'Chick-a-lee-lee, suh, you bin cunjerin' fer we-all dis long time an' we done place ow' 'pennance on yo' wu'd an' now you bin right 'ceitful wid us. 'Kase you done tol' us a fib we gwine teck an' cut off de een' uv yo' tongue w'at you tol' hit wid, an' dat gwine call hit ter yo' min' ev'y time you is temp'ed ter tell a fib.'

"So dey tuck an' tuck Chick-a-lee-lee an' cut off de tip een' uv his tongue an' dat huccome Chick-a-lee-lees have blunt tongues uver sence dat time. An' uver sence den dey bin tryin' ter curry faver wid de humans an' mek 'em fergit w'at dey done. Dey laks ter be near folks, an' dey mek derse'fs mighty useful stroyin' de bugs an' de wu'ms offen de fruit trees. Even w'en de snow is on de groun' dey come hoppin' roun' de houses, an' dey look might'y please' ef you tek notuss uv 'em. Dey sets der haid on one side an' looks up at you outer dey li'l bright eyes an' axes,



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Chick-a-lee? Chick-a-lee?
Is you fren's wid me?
Ef you isn' you orter be!
Chick-a-lee-lee? Chick-a-lee-lee?
Chick-a-lee?' "

As she finished the story, Aunt 'Phrony looked around and saw her grandson stretched out on the ground behind her, fast asleep. "Wi'yum! Wi'yum! Hi, Wi'yum!" she called without effect. "Wake up, Wi'yum! You year me, suh! Time I come dar an' walk up an' down yo' body a time er two, I reckon you wake up! I thought dat fotch you, suh. Jes' you g'long dis minnit an' ga'rr up dem nuts an' putt 'em in de bag, an' I 'spec' you-all chillen bes' he'p me git de baskits an' things toge'rr an' go down ter de branch an' wash yo' face an' han's, 'kase yo' Uncle Hinry be plumb scannelize ef I brings you home lookin' lak dat. Den we mus' be movin' outen dis ef we gwine git home befo' sundown; dat is," as she saw signs of reluctance, "lessen you wanster stay yer all night long wid some er de creeturs I done tol' you 'bout."

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One evening the children heard the sound of a banjo in the cook-house and begged to be allowed to go out and listen.

"Well, I declare," said their mother, "you children are getting so you don't care about being with white folks at all; your mother has to play second fiddle these days. I don't know what she is going to do for some little children to love her if it keeps up like this."

Kit ran to her, and, throwing his little arms about her, gave her a good hug, as if to reassure her, and Ned said they would have to make the most of their time, as they would presently go back home where there would be no negroes and no stories, when he and the other two would try to "make it up to her."

"Very well," said their mother, "since you are going to make it up to me, I suppose I shall have to let you go, but you must promise not to stay late."

They found Tim, the plow-boy, playing and singing for the benefit of the assembled company, among whom was Aunt Nancy's granddaughter, Cassy. She had been off that day to the nearest country store to trade, carrying what she called a "haid-turn"; a haid-turn being a small amount of produce, as much as could easily be carried on the head, which was to be exchanged for groceries or dry goods. Cassy was still decked out in

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her best dress of black and yellow calico with a marvelous garnishing of flying red ribbons. It seemed as if Tim's song was especially addressed to the young lady, for, as he "picked" industriously and threw his head back and opened his mouth to its fullest extent, he kept his eyes steadily on her face, as if to note the effect of his song.

LI'L 'LIZA JANE.

*"I got a house in Baltimo',
Li'l 'Liza Jane;
Po'ch behime an' po'ch befo',
Li'l 'Liza Jane.*

*I got a buggy an' a hoss,
Li'l 'Liza Jane;
Come 'long, honey, an' be der boss,
Li'l 'Liza Jane.*

*I got a house an' a track er lan',
Li'l 'Liza Jane;
Shake yo' foot an' clap yo' han',
Li'l 'Liza Jane.*

*Come, my love, an' go wid me,
Li'l 'Liza Jane;
An-a we will go ter Tennessee,
Li'l 'Liza Jane.*

Cassy and Tim were not an openly acknowledged "co'tin-couple," and it was, therefore, not etiquette for her to encourage him too obviously, so she tossed her

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head and said that she had not come there to hear any "ol' co'tin'-songs," but in the hope of listening to some stories. Eliza, the cook, as usual, took the part of the gentlemen. Said she, "Gal, de white folks cu'd git 'long widout butter on der bread, but dey ain' wanten, an' we-all cu'd git 'long widout songs, but we ain' wanten. You s'pose yo' 'pinion gwine mek any diff'ns ter Tim? Sho! g'way, gal, mens got sump'n else ter study 'bout sidesen w'at you does lak an' w'at you doesn' lak. But ef you right sot on yearnin' tales, mebbe we kin coax Sis' 'Phrony to favor the comp'ny."

Aunt 'Phrony said that she might be able to remember something if they would give her a little time in which to think it up, and Janey begged that it might be something about the much admired "Ol' Hyar'."

"Now, den," said the story-teller presently, "ef you wanten year 'bout ol' man Hyar', I reckon I mought ez well tell you 'bout de time he met up wid Flint Rock, 'kase I kain't 'member dat I has uver tol' you dat befo'."

"One time Hyar' he year dat de creeturs wuz gwine have a big darnse, an' noration bin sont roun' dat de queschin wuz ter be 'cided w'ich un 'em have de fines' dress, an' he say ter hisse'f, he do, 'Umph! I gotter have a han' in dis thing, sho'. Dey kain't run dat 'sputation lessen I'se dar ter he'p 'em out. I ain' bin lopin' roun' de kyountry all dese 'ears fer nuttin', neener; I boun' you I gwine be ez well dress' ez de nex' un.'"

"So he tuck an' primp hisse'f up ter look ez harnsum ez he kin, an' set off fer de darnse, an' he had hit in min' dat ef he run 'cross any creetur on de way whar have a finer suit er clo'es dan his, he gwine light in an' git hit 'way ef he kin.



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"He go clippin' 'long thu de kyouuntry, jes' ez full er mischief ez a aig is er meat, an' w'en he kain't fine nuttin' else ter do he tromple on ev'y po' li'l bug an' wu'm he see an' switch de huids offen all de flow's ez he pass. He trabel an' he trabel an' he trabel, an' las' de night come down an' ketched him a fur ways f'um de place whar de darnse wuz gwine be hilt, so he say ter hisse'f dat bein' ez dat wuz a strange kyouuntry an' he dunno de way ve'y well, he bes' camp out fer de night.

"'Bout dat time he met up wid Flint Rock, a gre't big ol' man wid gray hya'r, settin' down by de side uv de road. He wuz so ol' dat de moss wuz growin' on his back, an' he wuz so full er rheumatiz f'um settin' out in de damp dat he kain't move fu'm one spot lessen some one come 'long an' gin him a shove. He wuz a mighty sol-lumcholly an' sev'yur lookin' ol' man, but co'se Hyar' he wan't faze' by dat, so he walk right up in front uv him an' stan' wid his han's in his pockits an' say, 'Howdy, Mistah Flint Rock; how does yo' bones seem ter stan' de rackit dese days?'

"Flint Rock he 'spon', 'Howdy, Mistah Hyar'—I b'lieve dats you, ef I ain' mek no mistake. But I ain' 'zackly sho', 'kase my eyesight done fail me right much de las' 'ear er so. How does I fin' myse'f? Mighty po'ly, suh, mighty po'ly. Ef you'd bin settin' out yer in de sun an' de rain an' de wind an' de wedder, in de fog an' in de damp ez many 'ears ez w'at I is you be chock-full er rheumatiz, too. Yit I ain' complainin', an' I mek out ter enj'y myse'f yit. W'en I wuz younger an' went rollin' thu dis onfren'ly worl' I had a heap er fun an' seed a lot er sights, but now I done settle down yer, an' yer I stay, an' things is kind er good ter de ol' man,



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atter all. De li'l young green things, ferns an' sech, dey creeps up clost ter my footses an' stays dar, an' de lizzu'ds dey comes out an' lays down on my back ter wo'm derse'fs in de sun, an' de li'l bu'ds dey lights on me now an' den an' stays 'long 'nuff ter say 'howdy.' I jes' wall my eye up at de sun ez I set yer, an' he blink down at me right fren'ly an' wo'm up my back so's de mis'ry mos' quit me. De mosses dey is tryin' ter kiver me up so's't I kain't feel de col' wedder in my j'int. W'en hits wo'm de wind come 'long an' cool me off, an' de rain gin me a washin' now an' den, an' lots er de creeturs stops ez dey go by an' lays down in de shade er me ter git cool, an' I pass de time er day wid 'em an' git all de news. I jes' set yer an' look an' lissen, an' I see an' year mo'n you uver dream uv 'mong's de bu'ds an' de bees'eses an' de bugs an' de wu'ms an' de flow's, 'kase de ol' man set yer so quiet dey think he mus' be 'sleep, an' dey goes on same 'z ef I wan't roun'. Yas, Mistah Hyar', I cu'd tell you heap ef I wante'.

"'Well,' sez de Hyar,' sezee, 'dat suit my time 'zackly, 'kase I wuz kyountin' on spendin' de night wid you, suh, an' I reckon you ain' gwine kyare ef I build me a li'l fire right 'long side er you, so's't I kin keep wo'm. De nights gittin' right chilly.'

"'Dat dey is,' sez Flint Rock, sezee; 'I got a crick in my back a-raidy. Goodness on'y knows how I gwine git thu nu'rr winter. I 'spec' one'r dese yer hard freezes gwine come 'long an' jes' 'bout break me all up. I look ter see dat happen. You g'long an' build dat fire an' we kin set an' talk an' me wo'm up my ol' bones at de same time.'

"Hyar' he build de fire, an' git him a piece er wood,



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an' all de time Flint Rock wuz gwine on talkin', Hyar' he wuz settin' dar wu'kkin' 'way on de wood.

"Las' Flint Rock he say, sezee, 'Mistah Hyar', please, suh, ter 'scuse de cur'osity uv a ol' man, but mought I ax w'at is dat you mekin'?"

"Hyar' he say, 'W'y, sut'n'y, suh; dish yer's a maul an' dis a waidge.'

"Flint Rock he 'spon', 'Yas, so 'tis, so 'tis, I see dat now. You mus' 'scuse me axin', 'kase my sight so bad. But mought I ax you, suh, w'y you mekin' dat maul an' dat waidge?"

"'W'y, suh,' sez Hyar', sezee, 'I'se a mighty indush'ous man, an' hit go 'gins' de grain fer me ter set an' hol' my han's, so w'iles I lissen at you I jes' do dis ter keep my han' in an' pass away de time.'

"Pres'n'y Hyar' 'scuse hisse'f an' say he mus' git nu'rr li'l bit er wood, an' den he go off an' fin' hisse'f a place whar he kin hide w'en he wanter. He fin' a li'l kyave, an' den he walk back ter de camp, an' dar wuz ol' Flint Rock, fas' asleep by de fire. Wid dat he tuck an' tuck de waidge an' putt hit at Flint Rock's year an' hit de waidge a monst'ous clip wid de maul, wow! an' ol' Mistah Flint Rock bus' in mo'n a hunderd pieces. De pieces flewed high up an' 'menced ter fall thu de air, swish! zish! zoum! An' w'en he see dat, Hyar' lit out f'um dar an' hid hisse'f in de kyave.

"'Umph!' sezee ter hisse'f, sezee, 'I done save' de ol' man de trouble er waitin' fer de fros' ter break him up. He orter thank me fer puttin' him outen his mis'ry fo' de real col' wedder come on, dat's de trufe.' Atter w'ile he say, 'Lan' er libbutty! dis slow wu'k waitin' yer in de dark fer ol' Flint Rock ter git thu fallin'. W'en I



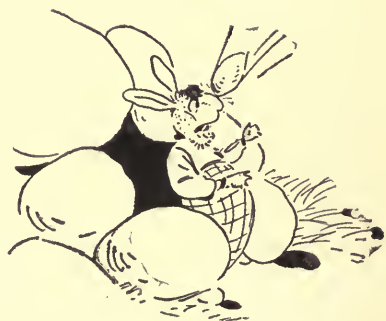
MR. HARE AND MR. FLINT ROCK

fotched 'im dat lick I ain' have no notion he gwine fly in li'l bits lak dat, but hit right hard ter tell w'at some folks gwine do 'twel you tries 'em. 'Pears ter me he orter be thu fallin' by now; I g'wine look out an' see.'

"Wid dat he poke his haid out. De las' piece wuz fallin', an' suz! ef you'll b'lieve me, hit tuck ol' Hyar' plumb on de een' er de nose, and dat huccome he bin gwine roun' wid a bent nose uver sence, an' all time drorin' hit up an' down lak he 'feard nu'rr rock gwine teck him on the een' uv hit mos' any minnit.'"

"Why, Aunt Nancy told us the reason Molly Hare's nose worked all the time was because she got it frozen," Ned exclaimed.

"W'at I know 'bout Molly Hyar'?" said 'Phrony, with scorn and some indignation. "How many mo' times is I gofter tell you I ain' know nuttin' 'bout no Molly Hyar'? Dis de one de Injuns tell 'bout, an' he ain' nuver have no wife 't all, fur 'z I know. I done tol' you he wuz a ol' bachelder; ef he'd had a wife ter keep 'im straight he oon bin in so much mischief."



MR. WILDCAT GOES TURKEY-HUNTING

"Landy!" said Cassy, after the story of old man Flint Rock, "ef dat Hyar' ain' beat all creashun. Seem lak he got mo' gumption dan all tu'rr creeturs putt toge'rr. Sho! gimme a man lak Mistah Hyar' whar got plenty er git up an' sperit to 'im." And she tossed her head and looked scornfully at Tim.

"Look yer, gal!" said 'Liza, "you dunno w'at you talkin' 'bout. Ef you kin lay yo' han' on a good, stiddy man, you better teck him an' thank yo' stars. Dese yer lively, gaily folks lak Mistah Hyar' does well 'nuff ter pass 'way de time wid, now an' den, but w'en hit comes ter livin' wid 'em, dat's anu'rr marter. Sidesen dat, dey git kotch up wid ev'y now an' den, jes' lak Sis' 'Phrony bin tellin' you. Mistah Hyar' wan't so smart but w'at he git his nose good an' smash."

"Wellum," said Tim, in his slow drawl, "I bin studyin' heap 'bout de creeturs, an' I bin wunnerin' ef dey don' none un 'em play dese yer tricks asseptin' ol' Hyar'."

"Bless yo' soul," answered 'Phrony, "dey all un 'em had pranks, mo' er less, some mo', some less. Now dar Mistah Sly-fox, he kind er prankish sometimes, an' Mistah Tarr'pin, too, an' I 'members one time w'en Mistah Wil'cat tucken hit in min' ter play a trick, dough to be sho' dat wuz sort er in de line er bizness, w'en he wuz out fer de puppus er gittin' hisse'f a dinner."

MR. WILDCAT GOES TURKEY-HUNTING

Coonie, the house-boy, was sitting on the hearth, leaning against the chimney jamb, head thrown back, more than half asleep, but at the mention of dinner he sat up and rubbed his eyes and asked, sleepily: "Dinner? Dinner raidy? Maw, is I year you say dinner?"

"Naw, dat you ain'," said 'Liza. "I done fill you up wid vittles no mo'n a hour ago, an' yer you is axin' fer mo'. 'Pears lak I kain't keep you filled; you is wusser dan any ol' wil'cat dat uver tromped de woods. Go on, Sis' 'Phrony, an' tell us 'bout Mistah Wil'cat an' his dinner."

"I done tol' you he wuz out fer de puppus er fillin' up," 'Phrony went on, "an' he wuz dat hongry hit 'pear ter him he wan't nuttin' but one big holler f'um de top uv his haid ter de tip uv his tail, one'r dese yer hollers whar jes' natchelly mek a man git up an' hump hisse'f ontwel hits filled. He go traipsin' up an' down, lookin' behime ev'y bush an' up ev'y tree an' yit he kain't fin' nuttin'. Las' he got so mad he 'gun ter gnash his toofs an' spit an' snarl an' hump his back up an' rub 'gin' de trees, an' all de time his eyes wuz shinin' lak plumb balls er fire, an' he wuz dat rantankerous dat no pusson 'ud want ter meet up wid 'im.

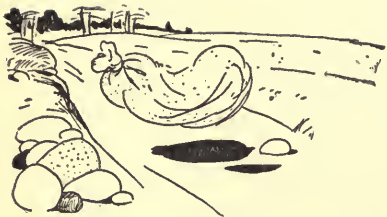
"Bout dat time he seed a flock uv wil'-tukkies, an' he 'low ter hisse'f dat tukkey 'ud jes' 'bout fit de size er his mouf, dough he ain' knowin' how he gwine git at 'em. He crope up an' he crope up, an' las' he wuz near 'nuff ter watch 'em. Dey wuz hol'in' a darnse, de funnies' you uver see er year tell 'bout. Der tails wuz all spread out lak a fan an' de gobblers wuz all puff' up an' struttin' fit ter kill, w'iles de ladiz wuz mekin' gre't 'miration over 'em an' follerin' atter 'em, steppin' high



AT THE BIG HOUSE

lak dey wuz trompin' on aigs, an' gwine roun' an' roun' in a succle, lookin' mighty proud an' kyar'vin' der haid high in de air an' balancin' wid der necks at ev'y step.

"Wil'cat grin so't he show ev'y toof in his haid, an' he say ter hisse'f, sezee, 'Um-umph! some dem ladiz gwine laugh on de wrong side der moufs 'fo' long. Ef dey on'y knowed w'at comin' dey'd quit dat foolishness an' use dem laigs ter git outen dis. Good thing fer me dey is fools. I reckon I'd have mighty po' pickin's ef der wan't so many fool creeturs gwine up an' down de face er de yearf.'



"De tukkies wuz darnsin' down in a li'l holler, an' Wil'cat he crope roun' ter de top er de hill an' tucken de game bag whar he bringed wid him, an' crawled inter hit. Den he turnt hisse'f aloose an' rolled over an' over down de hill, bimpitty, bumpitty, bampitty, bim! an' lan'ed right in de midse er de tukkies.

"Dey wuz dat 'stonish dey ain' know w'at ter do, but w'en de bag stan' up on een' an' 'gun ter r'ar an' charge roun', dem po' creeturs wuz plumb stunded, too 'stracted even ter run. No wunner dey wuz dat-a-way, fer uv all de doin's anyb'dy uver see, Mistah Wil'cat's tuck de lead. Ter see nuttin' but a ol' bag jumpin' high in de air an' turnin' somersets an' rollin' on de groun' an' den gittin' up an' doin' all sawts er steps, dat 'ud 'a bin jes' too much fer any pusson, let 'lone dem fool tukkies.

"W'en he git 'em kind er daze' an' 'stracted he step outen de bag an' he say, sezee, 'Howdy, ladiz an' gemmen, howdy! I hope I sees you well an' in de enj'yment er good healt'. I seed you down yer havin' a pow'ful good time, an' I had de insurance ter jine you an' give you a eenvite ter teck a roll down hill in dish yer bag er





MR. WILDCAT GOES TURKEY-HUNTING

mine. You-all think darnsin' is fun, but hits mighty po' shucks 'long side er de sport er rollin' down hill in a bag. Dem whar ain' tried hit dunno nuttin' 't all 'bout hit, an' w'ats mo', dey ain' *gwine* know lessen dey tries hit. Come one, come all! Step up, ladiz an' gemmen; de fus' one in gits de fus' ride. I'll tote you ter de top er de hill an' give you a shove down. Dellaws! w'at y'all hang back fer? Y'all so p'lite I 'spec' you 'feard you be onmannerly ef you gits in fus'. Nemmine 'bout dat, I'll gin you ev'y one a whu'l. Step in, step in, my time mighty val'able. I gotter be movin' outer dis 'fo' long an' I dunno w'en I gwine come dis way ag'in. You dunno w'at yer missin' ef you let dis chanct slip by. Sho'! I thought y'all had sense 'nuff ter know a good thing w'en you seed hit.'

"Two er th'ee er de ladiz mek up der min's dey'd lak ter try de new sport, jes' out er cur'osity, an' dey went tippin' up to'des Mistah Wil'cat whar he'z hol'in' de mouf er de bag open. Jes' den a ol' gobbler step up befo' em. 'Twuz Mistah Wi'yum Wil'-tukkey, jes' a struttin' an' a puffin'. His fedders wuz shinin' in de sunlight lak brunze, an' his laigs wuz raid an' his neck blue, wid warts stannin' out over hit, an' he have on de fine by'ud an' wattles whar he stole 'way f'um Mistah Tarry-long Tarr'pin. He sut'n'y look harnsum, an' he sut'n'y ac' lak he knowed hit. He step up befo' de ladiz an' bresh 'em ter one side an' say, 'Naw, ladiz, rollin' down hill ain' no fitten 'musemint fer wimmins; leave dat fer de mens. G'long home an' tend ter y'all's famblies. Ef de trufe wuz knowed, I 'spec yo' chillen is all scattered out inter de bresh by derse'fs dis ve'y minnit

AT THE BIG HOUSE

whar sump'n boun' ter git 'em. 'Spectable wimmins darnsin' at yo' time er life! Wimmin-folks ain' got no bizness w'ay f'um home, nohows; sho' ter git inter mischief an' do sump'n nu'rr dat ain' fitten fer 'em ter do. Set still an' 'have yo'se'fs an' let de men-folks 'tend ter de runnin' roun'. Lawdy, lawdy! I kain't see w'y you all de time wantin' ter do lak de men-folks does!



"Wid dat he flounce hisse'f inter de bag, an' Wil'cat he dror de strings in a jiff, an' de way he lit out f'um dat place inter de low-groun's wuz a caution ter de beholdens. Ez he go chargin' thu de bresh he yell back, 'Good by, ladiz, saw'y ter run off wid de haid er de fambly, but y'all mus'n' fault me fer dat. He would be de fus' in de bag. Dat w'at he git fer not bein' p'lite 'nuff ter let de ladiz have fus' chanct. Ladiz fus' ev'y time, I ses! Dat's me. Whoop-ee! good-by, ev'yb'dy! see y'all ag'in some urr time w'en I git hongry.'

"De tukkies dey flewed up wid a gre't cryin' an' flutteration, an' dey wan't seed no mo' in dat place, I kin tell you, ner nob'dy uver bin able ter 'suade one ter putt haid in a bag sence dat time; dey done 'member hit too well. Dey flewed off gobblin' an' gabblin', an' one ol' un she say ter tu'rrs, 'Uh-huh! 'pears lak some er de mens gits inter trouble w'en dey g'way f'um home, well ez de wimmins. I don' see but w'at we got jes' ez much sense ez dat ol' Wi'yum Wil'-tukkey, atter all. I reckon he'd lak ter change places wid us dis ve'y minnit.'

"An' dey all flapped der wings an' ses, 'Yas, lawd! 'Trufe, too! 'I boun' you!'"

MR. FOX TURNS FARMER

When Aunt 'Phrony had finished telling how the Wil'cat caught Mr. William Wild-turkey it was Aunt Nancy's turn to entertain the company. The children reminded her of a story she had once told them about certain shrewd practices of Mr. Hare's by which he circumvented Mr. Sly-fox, and they wanted to know why it was that he always got ahead of the other animals.

"I dunno jes' huccome so," she said, "but 'pears ter me dem gre't big eyes an' dem long years is w'at he'p him out; he see an' year mo' wid 'em in a minnit dan urr folks knowin' in a week, an' den he set up on his ha'nches an' wu'k his nose, sort er so, an' study w'at use he kin putt hit all to in de way er meanness, all de time lookin' jes' ez meek an' innercent ez a lamb."

"Were he and the fox friends afterwards?" asked Ned. "I bet I'd a-thrashed him good if he came fooling around me."

"Well," said Aunt Nancy, "dey kind er, sort er patch hit up, but der feelin's wuz wu'kkin' un'need all de w'ile an' boun' ter riz up ter de top sometime, same 'z dish yer barm I putts inter de wheat-bread. But Fox he 'low ter hisse'f dat mebbe he kin mek use er ol' Hyar' an' git evin wid him at one an' de same lick, so one day he call roun' at ol' man Hyar's, an' atter dey pass de time er day, he say, 'Mistah Hyar', I gittin' mighty tired er dish

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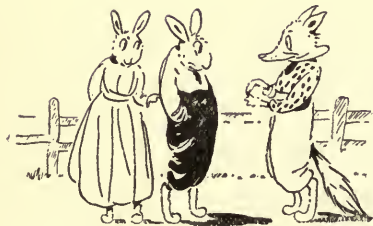
yer huntin' an' fishin' bizness. Hits hard wu'k, suh, hard wu'k, an' my ol' ooman she gittin' kind er raspy 'kase I ain' bring home mo' vittles ter her an' de chillens. I tell her dis mawnin' I b'lieve I gwine go in de farmin' bizness, an' she tucken ter de notion, but she say I kain't do hit by myse'f, dat I 'bleeged ter have he'p, an' she 'low, she did, dat mebbe me an' you cu'd go in cahoots in dis marter, fer hit well knowin' ter ev'y-b'dy dat you is a gre't han' fer all sorts er gyardin-truck.'

"Right dar Fox grin ter hisse'f, 'kase hit wuz de sho'-nuff trufe dat Hyar' wuz fond er gyardin-truck, mo' 'special w'at come outen urr folkses gyardins.

"Mis' Molly Hyar' she wuz doin' chores roun' de house, stoppin' now an' den wid her han's on her hips ter lissen at 'em talk er ter cuff one'r de chillens, fer Bunny an' Honey wuz rollin' in de ashes on de ha'th, an' Jumper an' Thumper wuz playin' leap-frog, an' Winker an' Blinker wuz tryin' ter pull de water-pail over. 'She go roun' behime her ol' man an' hunch him in de back an' whusper in his year, 'Spunk up, now, Mistah Hyar', an' tell him you go in cahoots wid 'im, 'kase dish yer's yo' chanct ter fool 'im ag'in.'

"So Hyar' he do lak he studyin' 'bout hit, an' las' he say, sezee, 'Well, I dunno 'bout dis gyardin-truck, 'kase hit pe'ish out in de col' wedder; I bin studyin' 'bout lettin' dat go an' raisin' me a cawn crap dat las' all thu de winter.' He say dat 'kase he knew mighty well he gwine live offen urr folkses gyardins in de summer, but he ain' knowin' w'at he gwine do, 'zackly, 'bout vittles fer de winter.

"Fox say dat he 'gree ter de cawn crap, an' den Hyar'



MR. FOX TURNS FARMER

lean his haid on his han' an' do lak he study some mo'. Las' he say, sezee, 'I dunno w'at we gwine do 'bout plowin'. De groun' orter be bruk up dis ve'y day, an' yer me all lame' up f'um dat las' spell er rheumatiz. I be mighty saw'y ter see you start in by yo'se'f, but I kain't see de way outen hit. I 'low de wedder gwine be li'l wo'mmer atter w'iles an' den I kin light in an' do de wu'k er two mens ter mek up fer dis.'

"Fox kind er 'spicion dat Hyar' was foolin' him, but he wuz de green han' in de farmin' bizness an' hatter be showed how ter do de wu'k, so he kain't say nuttin'. He tromp all day over de rough clods, drivin' de plow, 'twel his han's wuz all blistu'd, an' he wuz dat tired he hatter hol' onter de plow hannels ter keep f'um drappin'. All dat time ol' man Hyar' wuz settin' at home in de arm-cheer, smokin' an' teekin' hit easy. He 'ud grin ter hisse'f ev'y now an' den, an' w'en Mis' Hyar' ax him w'at de marter, he 'ud tell her, 'Oh, nuttin, nuttin' 't all, jes' a li'l spazzum er de jaw, 'twon't las', don' 'mount ter nuttin', nohow.' But Mis' Hyar' too smart ter be tucken in dat-a-way; she knowed sump'n wuz up, an' she go off moufin' ter husse'f, 'Shucks! ef dar's one thing I hate mo'n anu'rr hits ter see a fool man settin' up laughin' ter hisse'f w'en nob'dy else knows w'at de joke is; looks too triflin' fer any use. 'Pears lak he mus' be laughin' at you er else at de empty air, one'r de two, an' nob'dy but a plumb ijit gwine do dat las'.'

"W'en plantin' time come, Hyar' drug hisse'f out ter de fiel' an' let de cawn run thu his fingers lak he'z so weak he kain't hol' onter hit. Den, all ter onct, he wuz tucken wid a fit er de shivers an' trimmle lak a aspum,

AT THE BIG HOUSE

an' he say he b'lieve he gittin' de bone-break fever, an' he 'bleeged ter go home an' git on de baid.



“W'en de time done come ter wu'k de cawn, Hyar' tucken a hoe an' g'longed ter one een' uv a row an' tol' Fox ter begin at tu'rr een', an' den dey'd meet in de middle, an' dat way each man be sho' ter do half. I let you

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know he wuz mighty slow at his een' er de row an' w'en dey wuz 'bout ter meet, he 'mence ter sing songs an' tell tales an' cut sech shines dat ol' Fox ain' notuss how li'l wu'k bin done at dat een' er de line. W'en Hyar' see he done got Fox's min' clean offen de wu'k, he tuck him by de shoulder, right fren'ly an' familious, an' turn him roun' tu'rr way, an' den he say: 'Well, well, ol' man, you hasn' come near half-way, but you does mighty well fer a green han'. Jes' you g'long back ter de een' er de nex' row, an' w'en we meets ag'in, lessee ef you kain't git li'l mo' nearer ter de middle.'

"Ef Fox had look behime 'im he 'ud 'a knowed he bin fooled, but he ain' have de sense ter do dat, so he go trudgin' an' trampin' all de way down de row, w'iles Hyar' he gin a hop, skip an' jump an' wuz back in his place in a jiff, 'kase he ain' have fur fer ter go.

"Dey kep' hit up dat-a-way ontwel shuckin' time, w'en dey wuz ter 'vide de crap. Den Hyar' he say, sezee, 'I done had de mos' spe'yunce an' sidesen dat I is good at figgers, so I reckon I bes' do de kyountin' an' let you do de shuckin'.' So Mistah Fox he sot down below an' pullt de shucks offen de cawn an' th'owed de years up ter ol' Hyar', whar wuz stannin' up in de cawn-crib ter ketch 'em.

"He kyount straight fer li'l w'ile, 'kase he seed Fox cuttin' his eye up at 'im ev'y now an' den, but pres'n'y, w'en he think he got 'im offen de scent an' de cawn 'gin ter pile up roun' 'im so't Fox cu'dden see 'im ve'y well, he lit out inter meanness ag'in an' start ter kyountin' wrong. All de time he wuz singin' a ol'-time shuckin'-song whar run lak dis:

AT THE BIG HOUSE

*'Husk-o up an'-a-husk-o down,
An'-a-husko, husk-o all aroun',
Turn, O ladiz, turn, turn,
Somebody's at de winder.'*

"W'en he sing 'husk-o up,' he kotch a year er cawn, an' w'en he sing 'husk-o down,' he mek lak he th'ow hit on Fox's heap, but stidder dat he pass hit roun' behime him w'en he say 'husk-o, husk-o all aroun',' an' w'en he say 'Turn, O ladiz, turn, turn,' he drap hit sof'ly onter his own heap. He do dat ev'y urr time, an' I ses ter you dat w'en dey got thu, ol' man Fox come out at de li'l een' er de hawn, wid a pow'ful po' showin' er cawn.

"Fox scratch his haid an' feel mighty jubous. He say, 'Yer I is, done wu'k day in an' day out, rain er shine. Done plow, done sow, done hoe, done harves', an' dish yer li'l heap er cawn all I got ter show fer hit. Sump'n wrong, sump'n 'bleeged ter *be* wrong, yit I kain't jes' prezackly putt my paw on hit. I boun' ol' Hyar' know mighty well w'at 'tis. But 'tain' no use ter ax him ques'hins ner argyfy, 'kase he boun' ter slip outen hit, somehow. I wish 't I had 'im yer dis ve'y minnit, de trash-er-de-worl'! I boun' I'd teck de natchel hide offen 'im.'

"Jes' 'bout den Hyar' come sa'nterin' 'long an' year de las' wu'ds whar Mistah Fox done say. 'Who dat you gwine teck de hide offen him?' sezee. 'Oh, nuttin' 't all, Mistah Hyar', nuttin' 't all; jes' one'r my chillens whar bin talkin' up sassy ter his maw w'iles I bin 'way f'um home, farmin'. Chillen gittin' mighty 'sumptious dese days, Mistah Hyar'; mighty 'sumptious, suh; an' we-all mus'n' spare de rod lessen we wants ter spile de chil'.'

MR. FOX TURNS FARMER

"In co'se Hyar' wan't tucken in by dat talk 'bout de 'havishness er Mistah Fox's chil', but he pass hit over an' say, mighty fren'ly: 'Mistah Slickry Sly-fox, how 'bout dat 'tater crap uv ow'n? We mus' be gittin' dat in soon er Jack Fros' gwine come 'long an' git de good uv hit befo' we-all.'

"Dat wuz de time Fox think he see de chanct ter git ahaid er ol' Hyar'. He wuz dat green 'bout farmin' he ain' know dat de good part er de 'tater crap wuz un'need de groun'; he think de good part's on top, same ez wid de cawn crap, w'ich wuz de on'ies one he know anything 'bout; so he say, "Well, Mistah Hyar', ef hit be 'greeable unter you, I'd lak ter spar' you all dat kyountin' bizness you done went thu wid wid de cawn, an' so I ses le's we 'vide up de 'tater crap dis-a-way: me tek all dat's in sight, you tek all dat's outer sight; me all dat's 'bove de groun', you all dat's un'need hit.'

"Hyar' wuz dat tickelt he kain't keep his face straight, so he turn his back an' say, "'Scuse me jes' one minnit, Mistah Slickry, I got a bite, an' I'se 'bleeged ter tend ter hit.' His sides shuk so't he'z feard Fox might see 'im an' back outen de bargum. But Fox so please' wid de notion er comin' hit over ol' Hyar' dat he ain' notuss nuttin'.

"Hyar' turn roun' pres'n'y an' do lak he study li'l bit, an' den he say: 'Mistah Fox, I reckon I hatter 'gree ter dis 'rangemint, fer you done wu'k right fait'ful, but 'pears lak hit kind er one-sided, 'kase ev'yb'dy know-in' dat 'tater-tops mek mighty tasty greens, same time 't dey knows de wuf'lessness er de roots. Nemmine, I gwine do lak you sez.'

"Den Fox go all thu de 'tater-patch cuttin' off de

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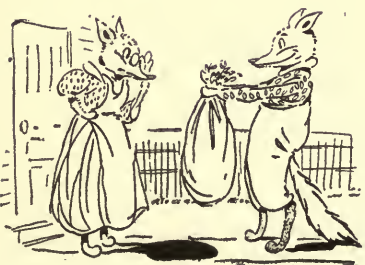
tops, an' Hyar' foller 'long atter 'im diggin' up de roots, an' bofe un 'em wuz so please' wid w'at dey doin' dat dey hatter stop ev'y now an' den an' go off li'l ways ter laugh. Den dey'd come back an' be mighty sof'-soapy, an' offer ter he'p one nu'rr, an' den wu'k on 'twel dey 'bleeged ter bus' out ag'in. Las' dey wuz thu, an' Fox went trundlin' off home, staggerin' unner de gre't load er 'tater-tops he wuz kyar'yin' on his haid. W'en he git dar he wish he done stay 'way, fer Mis' Fox she know mo' 'bout sech ez dat dan he' ol' man did. She say, 'W'at you got dar, all wilt' up?'

"He say: "'Tater-tops. Mek fine greens.'

"Den she jes' natchelly putt her mouf on 'im an' let 'im know w'at she think.

"'I boun' dat wuf'less Hyar' done tol' you dat,' sez she, 'an' w'at's mo', I 'low dat ol' ooman er his'n, dat ol' Molly Cotton-tail, done putt him up to hit; drat dat ooman!' sez she. 'Me settin' home yer slavin' fer you an' de chillens w'iles you off on dat farmin' bizness, an' now we-all gotter go hongry an' let dem hyar's nibble up all de 'taters you done wu'k so hard ter raise. W'at is I done dat I hatter be tied to a man so onignorant' he dunno 'taters grows un'need de groun', an' so shif'-less dat he let me an' my chillens go hongry? I reckon you bes' let farmin' 'lone an' go back ter yo' huntin' an' fishin', dat is, ef you got sense 'nuff ter keep ol' man Hyar' f'um gittin' han's on ev'ything, atter you done bag hit.'

"He ain' say nuttin'; he wuz dat outdone he kain't even jaw de ol' ooman, but f'um dat time ontwel dis day an' gineration, no pusson uver year tell er Mistah



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Slickry Sly-fox meddlin' wid farmin'. Hyar' done kyore him er dat.

"An' now I gotter mosey home," added the old woman with a huge yawn which she politely, but vainly, tried to smother, "an' I reckon you chillen better be movin', too, er de San' Man gwine ketch you betwix' yer an' de house, an' you won't git home dis night."

HOW THE 'POSSUM'S TAIL BECAME BARE

The children, in roaming through the woods one day, came in sight of the little clearing where Aunt 'Phrony's cabin stood, so hidden in the midst of tall pines that its existence was unsuspected until you were fairly on it. The old woman was in her tobacco-patch, stooping down and looking the plants over carefully, leaf by leaf, in search of insects.

The children ran toward her as fast as their little legs could carry them, crying: "Oh! there's Aunt 'Phrony! there's Aunt 'Phrony! Please, Aunt 'Phrony, stop and tell us a story."

She went on with her work, looking up at the children sidewise, now and then, and muttering as if half to herself: "Dunno no mo' tales, dese chillen done drug 'em all outen me long befo' now. Sidesen dat, s'pose I stops my wu'k, who gwine git dis 'baccy? W'y, de bugs an' de wu'ms, dat who. An' w'en de winter done come an' I wanster set 'long side de fire wid my pipe, whar I gwine git me any 'baccy? Kin y'all tell me dat?"

"Buy it," suggested Janey; "there's lots and lots of stores in town where they don't sell anything else."

Aunt 'Phrony raised her hands and rolled her eyes. "Fer de lan' sake!" said she, "does y'all think I made er money? Ain' I knowin' dat dar's plenty sto's an'

HOW THE 'POSSUM'S TAIL BECAME BARE

plenty 'baccy, but de money ain' so plenty, I kin tell you. Whar you reckon I git de money?"

"Out of my bank," piped up little Kit, nodding his head so fast that the yellow curls bobbed and danced on his shoulders, "out of my 'ittle bank. I'se dot 'lev-enty-five coppers in it, an' I'll div 'em all to Aunt 'Phrony when the naughty bugs and worms eat up her 'baccy. 'Es I will!"

The old woman's heart was softened by the generosity of the little boy, so she stopped work and gave him a hug, saying: "Bless de baby! now jes' fer dat I gwine gin him a story all fer hisse'f, dat I is. Ef you 'haves yo'se'fs, de res' er you kin lissen, too, I reckon, but I wants y'all ter know dat dis tale b'longs ter de li'l boy whar settin' right yer by me.

"I nigh mos' think I gwine tell 'bout ol' 'Possum an' his doin's, 'kase he's de man whar seem ter riz up in front er my min' dis day. Ef y'all ain' seed him, y'ain' knowin' dat he got a tail mos' ez long ez w'at he is, an' dat bare dat Mistah Rat hatter git up early in de mawnin' ter show de ekal uv hit. But in de day an' time whar I tells you 'bout, hit wan't dat-a-way. His tail wuz jes' ez big an' bushy an' harnsum ez de one ol' Mistah Slickry Sly-fox have sech a time hidin' 'way f'um de houn's an' de hunters. An' ef he wan't proud er dat tail, den I dunno proud w'en I see hit. Nair' fine day dat ol' Mistah Poky 'Possum ain' go perawderin' thu de woods wid dat tail hilt high up in de air fer tu'rr creeturs ter look at an' mek 'miration over. He g'long switchin' hisse'f sump'n lak Miss Janey do w'en she git on dat new raid dress. De creeturs dey stood hit fer so long time, an' den dey call a meetin'

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ter talk de bizness over an' see w'at dey gwine do 'bout hit, 'kase dey wuz all er one min', dat sump'n 'bleeged ter be done.

"Mistah Creechy Cricket he wuz dar, tryin' ter keep a still tongue in his haid long 'nuff ter year w'at tu'rr folks wuz sayin', but 'twuz mighty hard wu'k, 'kase he wuz one'r dese yer talky-talky mens whar wanster keep der chins goin' all de time. He nuver let his ol' ooman slip in a wu'd f'um one 'ear's een' ter tu'rr; you ain' nuver year a chirp yit outen Mis' Cricket. Ev'y now an' den endurin' er de meetin' he let out a chirp, an' dar whar he putt his foot in hit, fer w'en tu'rr creeturs yearn him, dat gin 'em a notion, an' dey ses ter one nu'rr, 'Hi! he de one ter git atter ol' 'Possum an' gin 'im a sho'-nuff tongue-lashin' an' tell 'im jes' prezackly w'at we-all thinks uv 'im.'

"So dey name hit ter Cricket, but he shake his haid an' say, 'Huh-uh, gemmen, I lak mighty well ter 'commodate you 'bout dis, but me an' Mistah 'Possum done fall out some sev'l 'ears back, an' sence den I ain' bin speakin' wid 'im—w'en I kin he'p hit.' Right dar tu'rr creeturs nudge one nu'rr an' wipe off a grin on der coat-sleeves, fer dey knowed Cricket jes' 'bleeged ter let out a chirp now an' den, 'kase he got one'r dese yer tongues whar hung in de middle an' wags at bofe een's.

"'Sho! sho!' dey ses, 'Mistah Creechy, is you sho'-nuff mad wid 'im?' He say, he do, 'Dat I is! an' you say good reason w'y w'en I tells you 'bout hit. I wuz hoppin' 'long one day, quiet an' peace'ble, not sayin' nuttin' ter no pusson, w'en I seed 'im come prancin' down de road, wavin' his tail an' actin' mighty airish. Dat sight kind er rile me, an' mebbe I sniffed an' let

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out a chirp er two an' ses "um-umph!" I ain' so sho' 'bout dat. But howsomuver dat mought be, he stop me an' ses, "Mistah Creechy Cricket, I done bin wantin' a talk wid you dis long time. I gotter tell you, fer de good er de hull passel er creeturs, dat yo' voice ain' true, you is mo' times offen de key dan on hit, an' me an' all de res' be might'ly 'bleeged ef you goes off som'ers by yo'se'f ter do dat uverlas'in' practussin' whar keeps folks f'um gittin' dey natchel slumbers. I ain' git a wink er sleep dese fo' nights han' runnin'." I ses ter you, gemmen, dat I wuz plumb riled by dat, 'kase not long befo' I spen' de night practussin' my voice nigh de holler tree whar ol' man 'Possum sleep, an' I 'clar' ter you, I done year him snore f'um de dark ontwel de daylight, an' w'at's mo' he snore so loud dat I kain't year my own voice an' ain' knowin' whe'rr I sing *Ol' Hunderd er S'archin' Praises*, let 'lone keepin' on de key. I up an' tol' him 'bout de snorin', but he ain' b'lieve me an' jes' laugh in my face an' walk off, fer I tell y'all hit heap mo' easier ter mek a man think black is white dan ter mek him b'lieve he uver snored a snore; he alluz gwine putt de blame on some urr pusson.'

"Cricket git so mad 'bout den dat he kain't say nuttin' fer a minnit, an' de creeturs crowd roun' him an' aig him on. 'Well, Mistah Cricket,' dey ses, 'he sho' did gin you imp'ence! Dat 'nuff ter aggervex you! Now de time fer you ter git even wid de sassy trash, an' we-all gwine back you up.'

"Dey git him so wu'k up dat las' he say he do de job, but he oon tell 'em how, 'ceptin' dat he ain' gwine have no wu'ds wid 'im. Den he hurry way f'um de



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meetin', 'kase he know ef he stay long 'nuff he 'bleeged ter tell someb'dy w'at he gwine do.

"Dat night he crope up ter de holler tree whar 'Possum wuz sleepin' an' went ter wu'k on dat tail er his'n. He tucken one hya'r at a time an' gnor hit mos' thu, an' dey wuz so many in de tail dat 'twuz a all-night job, an' ef he ain' bin sech a soon man he oon git thu den. He talk 'way ter hisse'f all de time. 'Possum sho' would 'a yearn him, 'ceptin' dat he snore all night widout even stoppin' ter turn over. Yit w'en ol' man Coon call nex' mawnin' ter ax him howdy, he say he feelin' mighty po'ly an' ain' sleep nair' a wink endurin' er de night. I done bin year humans talk lak dat befo' now, an' dey's mighty tetchy ef you tells 'em dey slep' mo'n dey think fer. Dat's one'r de times an' 'casions w'en you kin fool yo'se'f mo' easier dan not, 'kase co'se w'en youse 'sleep you dunno nuttin' 't all 'bout hit.

"W'en de sun git good an' up, Mistah 'Possum go out, same'z he bin doin', fer ter show hisse'f off befo' de face an' eyes er de creeturs. He wus prancin' 'long, monst'ous biggitty, wid his tail hilt high in de air, w'en he git ter a damp, swampish place whar kind er gin him de sniffles. He fotch a big sneege whar shuk him up all over, an' I 'clar' ter you dat w'en he git thu ev'y single hya'r done drap offen his tail an' lef' hit bare an' smooove ez de p'am er yo' li'l han'.

"He ain' knowin' nuttin' 't all 'bout dat, dough, an' g'long airish ez uver twel he come ter whar Mistah Cricket an' a passel er de creeturs wuz layin' low fer him ter pass, 'kase Cricket done tol' 'em 'bcut w'at he done, an' dey knowed de hya'rs wan't gwine stick on dar long.





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"When dey seed 'Possum switchin' down de road, showin' off dat ol' bare tail lak 'twuz gre't shakes, an' he not knowin' any diff'ns, dey bus' out laughin' so hard dat some un 'em 'bleeged ter lean up 'gin de trees, an' some un 'em git so sore dey hatter hol' on ter der sides ter ketch bref. Cricket so pleas' dat he kain't hol' his tongue, an' he chirp up loud 'z he kin,

*'I done done hit, I done done hit,
Nair' a hya'r is lef' upun hit.'*

"'Possum ain' knowin' w'at Cricket mean by dat, but tu'rr creeturs shet him up, an' den dey smooove down der grins an' wait for de ol' feller ter come up, jes' kind er snortin' an' snickerin' a li'l behime one han' ez dey say, 'Heyo, Mistah Poky 'Possum, whar dat tail er yo'n? W'at dat 'ar you drag behime? 'Clar' ef dat don' beat my time! You sho' is lef' yo' tail at home, you sho' is! Yo' tail nuver look dat-a-way; mus' b'long ter Mistah Rat! Lan' er gracious! 'Possum done bin ter de barber an' got him a clean shave dis time!'

"Las' 'Possum look behime, an' gre't-day-in-de-mawnin'! ef t'wan't nuttin' dar but jes' de ghos' uv his ol' tail. He felt so 'shame' uv hit an' uv de way he bin showin' off dat he drap down right den an' dar an' let on lak he wuz daid. An' sence dat time, w'ensomuver he see folks comin' he git ter thinkin' 'bout dat bare tail an' 'memb'in' how fine hit useter be an' how biggitty he useter ac' 'bout hit, an' he feel so mossified over hit all dat he alluz drap down an' roll over an' 'tend dat de bref er life done gone outen him. Heap er times he fool folks whar ain' knowin' him.



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"Dish yer tale 'splains how 'tis 'Possum come ter change his ways, an' stidder sleepin' in de night-time he sleep all day an' walk all night so's't his bare tail kain't be seed. Folks whar hunt him gotter go by night an' kyar' torches wid 'em so's't dey kin th'ow a light on him and let him know dey sees dat ol' bare tail.

"W'en de creeturs seed him layin' dar lookin' lak he sho'-nuff daid, dey felt kind er saw'y fer him, an' dey go roun' sayin' ter one nu'rr dat dey reckon he wan't sech a monst'ous fool atter all. But Cricket he mighty sharp an' up-ter-snuff, an' he kind er have his 'spicions er 'Possum, so he stay hidin' roun' w'en de res' go 'way, an' bimeby he see 'im git up an teck nu'rr look at de tail an' go slinkin' off in de bresh. Den Cricket jump up on a high bush an' sing at de top er his voice:

*'I done done hit, I done done hit,
Nair' a hya'r is lef' upun hit.'*

"An' he so might'ly please' wid w'at he done dat he bin keepin' up dat song uver sence, an' you kin year him at hit all night long, lessen you sleep ez soun' an' snore ez loud ez w'at ol' man 'Possum useter."

WHY THE 'POSSUM HAS BLACK EARS

The children were becoming proficient in the art of obtaining stories, and Janey in particular had early discovered that a successful method of getting another was to ask questions about the last one, so she made haste to say:

"Aunt 'Phrony, after the 'Possum's tail became bare were the animals friendly with him, and did they like him any better?"

"Law bless you, honey," she said, "he wuz a change' man, he wuz *dat*. He ain' have nuttin' lef' ter give hisse'f de highfalutins 'bout, an' he mighty 'shame' uv his foolishness, so he go roun' grinnin' at ev'y pusson he meet an' tryin' to curry favor wid ev'yb'dy, an' he bin doin' dat uver sence. I boun' you he'd grin at you-all ef he met up wid you. Tu'rr creeturs git so dey kind er lak him, an' dey ses ter one nu'rr dat he sut'n'y look ter be a pleasan' sort er pusson. Sidesen dat, he ain' have nuttin' lef' fer 'em ter be enviable 'bout, an' hit heap mo' easier ter lak folks whar ain' got nuttin' you wants an' ain' seem ter be no mo' empawtant dan w'at you is.

"So dey treat 'Possum kind er decent, an' las' him an' Mistah Tarry-long Tarr'pin git ter be mighty thick. Hit wuz 'long to'des de fall er de 'ear, jes' atter fros', w'en de 'simmons is ripe, an' ol' man 'Possum wuz lookin' right plump an' fat, 'kase he bin gawjin' hisse'f



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wid 'simmons. 'Possums is pow'ful fond uv 'em, an' dat de reason, I reckon, dat some folks calls 'em 'possum-apples' 'stidder 'simmons. But whatsumever name you calls 'em by, I knows dey meks mighty good 'simmon beer." Here she began humming as if to herself,

*"Sezee ter hisse'f, 'Wid right good kyare
I'll mek two gallons er 'simmon beer.'"*

Ned, who was very fond of music, begged Aunt 'Phrony to give them the whole song, which she finally did, protesting, however, that "'twan't nuttin' but one'r dese yer ol'-time nonsense songs, nohow," and that it had nothing to do with the 'Possum, but was all about a lazy person whose habits cost him his lady-love. It was called

THE YOUNG MAN WHO WOULDN'T MAKE CORN

*Gwine sing a li'l song, an' 'tain' ve'y long,
'All 'bout a young man dat oon mek cawn;
De reason w'y I nuver cu'd tell,
'Kase dis young man wuz alluz well.*

*He go ter his farm an' he peep in,
Grass an' de hog-weeds up ter his chin,
Grass an' de hog-weeds grewed so high
Dey mek dis young man fer ter sigh.*

*Goes ter his neares' naber's house,
Goes a-co'tin', ez we-all s'pose;
De gal wuz a peart un, sho'z yo' bawn,
Sez she, 'Young man, has you hoed yo' cawn?'*

WHY THE 'POSSUM HAS BLACK EARS

*'Oh, no, no, no,' wuz his reply,
'I think hit's time I laid hit by.'
But befo' he plant, hit wuz July,
An' in September he laid hit by.*

*In October dar come a white fros',
An' de seed uv cawn dis young man los';
Sez de gal, 'I'se single, an' so will remain,
Fer a lazy man I won't maintain.'*

*One fruit tree on his farm dar grew,
An' ev'y 'ear bore some good fruit, too;
Sezee ter hisse'f, 'Wid right good kyare
I'll mek two gallons er 'simmon beer.'*



AT THE BIG HOUSE

"But nemmine de beer, lemme git back ter de tale. W'en Tarr'pin see how fat 'Possum look, he say, 'See yer, Brer Poky 'Possum, seem ter me you lookin' right plump an' peart dese days, an' yer me, so po' dat you kin see ev'y bone in my body; jes' feel me if y'ain' b'lieve me. I is a plumb skillitin. I wish you tell me, suh, w'at you bin doin' ter fat up dat-a-way.'

"Den 'Possum grin' an' he say, sezee, 'Dat my sekert, but you is my fren' an' I don' min' tellin' you. Well, suh, I gits dis-a-way in de fall 'long er de 'simmons. 'Simmons is ripe den, an' dar ain' nuttin' ekal to 'em fer puttin' de kiverin' on a man's bones. I sut'n'y is saw'y ter see you look so swivel up an' pindlin', an' ef you kin keep a still tongue in yo' haid, I tek you out one'r dese nights an' git you a mess er 'simmons. 'Twon't do ter let tu'rr creeturs know, 'kase dey oon be 'nuff ter go roun'; mebbe you has notuss dat dar ain' no mo' sca'cer tree dan de 'simmon tree.'

"Tarr'pin say: 'I sut'n'y is s'prise. I bin thinkin' 'simmons wan't wuff shucks fer eatin', 'kase onct I tucken one in my mouf, an' suz! she drord so dat my mouf swunk up 'twel I wuz 'feard I wan't nuver gwine be able ter tek in a good moufful er vittles ag'in.'

"'Possum laugh fit ter kill at de idee er Mistah Tarr'pin eatin' green 'simmons. Sezee: ' 'Tain' ev'y pusson got de sense ter tek things at de right time; seem lak mos' un 'em mus' grab right in, an' dar whar dey come out missin'. I reckon dat how 'simmons come ter have sech a bad name wid mos' folks. But de fros' done bin yer now, Brer Tarry-long, an' 'simmons is prime, an' ef you won't tell, I tek you 'long wid me dis ve'y night.'

WHY THE 'POSSUM HAS BLACK EARS

"Ol' Tarr'pin he say, 'I cross my heart, suh, dat I won't tell, 'deed an' 'deed, an' double 'deed.' So dat night 'Possum tucken him thu de woods ter a tall tree whar wuz jes' ez full er 'simmons ez she kin stick. 'Now, den, Mistah Tarr'pin,' sezee, 'you gwine stay down yer on de groun' an' I gwine climb de tree an' shake fer you.' He went a-kitin' up de tree, swingin' f'um one limb ter tu'rr by dat long tail er his'n, whar he cu'd wrop roun' things heap easier sence de hya's all fell off, 'twel he fair' mek ol' Tarr'pin's haid swim. He shake an' he shake an' he shake, an' de 'simmons fall an' dey fall an' dey fall, an' all de time he shuk he wuz singin':



*'Possum's up de 'simmon tree,
Go 'long, Josey;*

*Oh, please, Mistah 'Possum, ter shake fer me,
Go 'long, Josey, go 'long.*

*De tree mighty tall, an' de limb mighty bare,
Go 'long, Josey;*

*Tek kyare, Mistah 'Possum, tek kyare, tek kyare,
Go 'long, Josey, go 'long.*

*I boun' you, ol' 'Possum gwine tek good kyare,
Go 'long, Josey;*

*Dough de tree mighty tall, an' de limb mighty bare,
Go 'long, Josey, go 'long.*

*He wrop his tail all roun' de limb,
Go 'long, Josey;*

*You kin shake de 'simmons, but you kain't shake him,
Go 'long, Josey, go 'long.'*

AT THE BIG HOUSE

“’Possum wu’k on so busy dat he done fergit ev’y-thing else, an’ pres’n’y he git ter shakin’ harder an’ harder an’ singin’ louder an’ louder. ’Bout den Mistah Wolf come lopin’ ’long thu de woods an’ yeard him. ‘Now, w’at kind er outlan’ish gwines on is dis, in de daid er night?’ sezee ter hisse’f; ‘I’se ’bleeged ter turn outen my way an’ see ’bout dis.’

“W’en he git ter de tree he see po’ ol’ Tarr’pin stuffin’ hisse’f, an’ he say, sezee, ‘Mistah Tarr’pin, w’at sort er lay-out is you got dar?’ Tarr’pin say, he do, ‘Oh, dish yer jes’ a li’l medincin I’se tekin’ ’kase I’se kind er run down an’ po’ly.’

“Wolf he ’low hit look ter him ez ef some er dat medincin ’ud ’gree wid him might’ly. Sezee, ‘I think hit nigh ’bout jes’ suit my case,’ an’ wid dat he wade plumb inter de ’simmons an’ et ’em up so fas’ dar wan’t none lef’ fer Mistah Tarr’pin, ’kase *he* nuver hurry ’bout anything, not even de puttin’ way uv his vittles.

“’Possum up in de tree seed w’at gwine on below, an’ sezee ter hisse’f, ‘Now dis de time an’ ’casion w’en I gwine fix Mistah Wolf so’s’t he kain’t gobble up urr folkses ’simmons fer one w’ile, mis’able ol’ big mouf!’

“He tuck an’ tuck a rock he kyar’d wid him, an’ he wrop his tail good an’ tight ’roun’ a limb, an’ he lean outen de tree so’ster tek good aim, an’ he drap hit so close ter ol’ Wolf dat li’l mo’ she’d ’a hit him on de nose. Wolf year her fall ker-chug! an’ she thump so haivy he think hit mus’ be mighty big ’simmon, an’ he ’low ter hisse’f dat he gotter have dat un ter fill up de las’ chink uv his stummick. He ’z dat greedy he ain’ stop ter bite ner tas’e ner chew; he jes’ swoller her hull, an’ stidder gwine down, dar she stuck; he kain’t gulp her



WHY THE 'POSSUM HAS BLACK EARS

down ner cough her up; dar she wuz an' dar she stay. *He roll, he waller, he kick, he cough,* he try ter call fer he'p, but 'tain' no use, an' I let you know 'twan't long 'fo' he stop kickin' an' strotch hisse'f out an' jes' natchelly die fer de want er bref.

"Den 'Possum he skunt down de tree in a hurry an' 'zamine' de kyarkiss ter see ef he'z sho'-'nuff daid. 'Um-umph!' sezee, 'look lak dat medincin ain' 'gree wid Mistah Wolf well 'z he think fer. Dat 'z a monst'ous big pill he try ter swoller, but w'en folks come 'long yer an' fin' him dey kain't blame us, fer dey'll see de 'simmons stickin' ter his mouf, an' den dey'll know he wuz dat big a fool he ain' kin tell de diff'ns 'twix' 'simmons an' flint rocks. Le's we hurry up an' git outen dis, but 'fo' I goes I gwine cut off his years an' tek 'em home ter my fambly, 'kase dey ain' gwine b'lieve hit lessen dey sees hit.'

"De fambly wuz might'ly sot up over de killin' er Mistah Wolf, an' 'Possum tuck ter wearin' de years stuck on over his own. Dat huccome de wolfs ter 'spicion who kilt der daddy, an' dar come mighty nigh bein' trouble.

"I done fergit ter tol' you dat Wolf had black years, an' dat w'y de Injun folks, uver sence 'Possum bin wearin' dem borried years, calls him 'de animuel wid de black years.' My daddy he wuz a Injun, an' he done tol' me de tale an' de name er de 'possum in *Churry-kee*, but hit soun' so curisome I done fergit hit. An' now you-all bes' run 'long home, mos' time fer yo' dinner, an' lemme look atter de bugs on dish yer 'baccy-patch er mine."



MIS' CAT AND MR. FRISKY MOUSE

One night the children again heard the sound of a banjo proceeding from Aunt Liza's domain, the cook-house. Aunt Liza was entertaining some of her friends, and just as the children entered she said:

"Dat sut'n'y wuz a fine tale, Sis' 'Phrony, an' now we gwine lissen ter Sis' Nancy, 'kase long ez I bin knowin' her she alluz got sump'n wuf yearin'. Ain' dat de trufe now?" appealing to the circle and meeting with polite confirmation from everybody except Aunt 'Phrony, for it may be accepted as an axiom that there is not room enough for two professional story-tellers at the same fireside, especially if they chance to be ancient foes.

"'Scuse *me*, please, Sis' 'Liza, I'se feelin' kind er tizzicky dis evenin'," said Nancy, a little offended at not having had a hearing before.

'Phrony sniffed contemptuously. "Umph! tizzicky!" said she in an audible aside, "dat a new name fer hit. Whyn't she say she gittin' ol' an' losin' her 'memb'ance?"

Aunt Nancy snorted and tossed her head defiantly. "Ol'! who ol'? Well, ef dat don' beat bob-tail! W'en you-all knows dat ooman wuz a li'l ol' no-kyount piccaninny, runnin' roun' yer wid her hy'ar stickin' out in pigtails all over her haid, long befo' I wuz bawnded. Sho! I reckon I 'members mo' tales dan w'at she is

MIS' CAT AND MR. FRISKY MOUSE

uver year de names uv, so many dat I dunno whar ter begin, but I b'lieve I gwine gin you one dat tell 'bout a fool ooman whar place her pennunce on de wu'd uv a man an' fin' husse'f lef' out in de col'," here she looked significantly at Aunt 'Phrony, "an' de name er de tale is 'Mis' Cat an' Mistah Frisky-mouse.'

"Onct dey wuz a li'l mouse bin livin' down a dark hole fer a right smart uv a spell, an' gnorrin' an' gnorrin' ter git thu inter de room whar folks wuz livin'. Las' he git clean thu an' he skip out middle ways de flo' an' darnse an' caper an' kyar' on, an' set up on his ha'nches an' ju'k his haid, fus' dis-a-way an' den dat-a-way, an' drap down on all 'fo's an' run inter de cornders, an' peek an' peer ev'ywhars wid dem li'l bright eyes er his'n. Dar wan't no pusson 't all in de room, 'scusin' a big ol' cat whar wuz snoogin' an' snorin' by de fire, an' he step so light he wan't 'feard er wakin' her. 'Holy Moses!' sezee ter hisse'f, 'dish yer my chanct, sho' ez I'm a livin' sinner! Look out, ol' lady, any ooman dat go ter sleep over her dinner kain't kyount on hit bein' dar w'en she wake up; naw, ma'am, dinners too sca'ce fer dat; dey ain' layin' 'roun' loose ev'y day in de week. I mus' let out dish yer belt er mine er I ain' gwine be able ter crowd hit all in.'

"Wid dat he tiptoe up ter de plate whar settin' by de fire an' nibble away fer dear life on Mis' Cat's dinner. Den he go darnsin' roun' some mo', an' he feel so gaily an' so sot up 'kase he done finish de job er gnorrin', dat he say he b'lieve he gwine on a frolic, an' he jes' natchully 'bleeged ter have some whisky. He go sniffin' an' snuffin' roun', an' las' he spy a jimmyjohn er whisky settin' up on a high she'f. But, bless you, he wan't



AT THE BIG HOUSE

gwine let dat hinner him, fer I ses to you, gemmen an' ladiz, dat ef a man's sot on gittin' a dram, he gwine climb a mountain er dig down ter de baid-rock but w'at he gwine git de wufless truck, an' nuver stop ter think 'bout hit bein' any trouble, neener.

"So he skunt up ter de she'f an' clim' ter de mouf er de jug an' perched on de rim an' 'gun ter sip de whiskey. He dip down an' git a moufful an' den th'ow back his haid an' smack his lips an' lick de draps offen his whiskers. 'Lan'! lan'!' sezee, 'dish yer de stuff I bin jes' natchully honin' fer dis long time. Seem lak hit go prezackly ter de right spot an' limber me up might'ly in my feelin's.' Den de dram 'gun ter mount up in his haid an' he done fergot whar he wuz an' 'menced ter sing a snatch f'um a ol'-time drammin' song, whar runs dis-a-way:



*'Mammy tuck a big dram,
Daddy tuck a whopper,
When hit come ter my turn
I hatter lick de stopper.'*

"Jes' den his footses slip an' down he go, ker-chug! inter de whisky. He spit an' he sputter an' scrabble roun' tryin' ter git out, but 'twan't no use. *Gentermans!* dat 'uz one time w'en he git his fill er whisky. 'My lan'!' sezee ter hisse'f, 'dish yer's jes' de way you fin' mos' things in 'dis life: heap mo' easy ter git in dan 'tis ter git out. 'Pears lak dese white folks got mighty li'l sense, puttin' der drams inter ol', slickry-sided bottles. How kin dey 'spec' mouses ter git in an' out er sech contrapshuns, I lak ter know.' He see he wuz

MIS' CAT AND MR. FRISKY MOUSE

fillin' up so fas' dat sump'n gotter be done, so he squeak out at de top uv his voice: 'Mis' Cat! Oh, Mis' Cat! Hi, Mis' Cat! Please, ma'am, ter he'p me outen dis whisky!'

"Cat she open her eyes an' blink a li'l, kind er slow an' sleepy, an' las' she say: 'Is my years done 'ceive me, er is I year a mouse? Mebbe I done dream hit.'

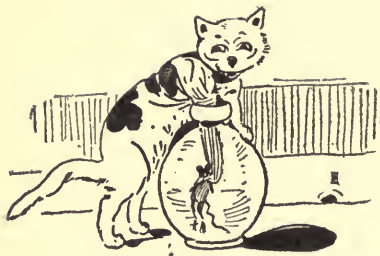
"'Naw'm, dat you didn'!' sings out Mistah Frisky-mouse. "'Twuz a sho'-'nuff mouse, an' I'se him, up yer in de whisky, an' I wants you, please ma'am, ter climb up an' he'p me out.'

"'Well, uv all de imp'ence!' sez Mis' Cat ter husse'f, sez she, 'an' dat's de same li'l rascal whar done runned 'way f'um me mo' times dan I kin kyount. *Him* ter call on *me* fer he'p!' Den she say out loud: 'Mistah Frisky-mouse, I sut'n'y 'd lak ter 'bleege you 'bout dis, but I gotter tell you, I think hit sarve you right ter drown in dat whisky, 'kase you wuz stealin' de white folkses dram w'en you drapt in. Yas, I think hit be 'bout right fer you ter be lef' ter die in de midse er yo' sin, ef I mought 'spress myse'f dat-a-way.'

"Mis' Cat wag her haid an' look sollum; she done fergit how many times she bin roguin' it in de white folkses cream-jug. *She* wan't de one whar git ketched dis time, so she ac' mighty pious over Mistah Mouse's thievin'.

"He baig an' he baig an' he baig, an' las' she say, 'Well, I he'p you out dis time, ef you promuss me you set by de fire an' dry yo'se'f good, befo' you go.' Right dar she wunk one eye at de fire an' smack' her lips an' sez she ter husse'f, sez she, 'I gwine git me a mouse dis trip, sho' ez shootin'.'

AT THE BIG HOUSE



"In co'se Mouse he gin de promuss, 'kase 'twuz mighty nigh time's-up wid him, yit he wan't so fur gone but w'at he wunk de one eye whar wuz still 'bove liquor an' ses ter hisse'f, 'Yas'm, yas, *ma'am*, jesso, *ma'am*, but I have you fer ter know dat I wan't bawnded yistiddy ner de day befo', ner de day befo' dat, an' I ain' 'spec' ter die ter-day ner to-morrer ner de day atter."

"Soon 'z he gin de promuss, Mis' Cat she lipt up on de she'f an' retched a paw down in de jimmyjohn an' fished 'im out, an' suz! he sut'n'y wuz a mis'able lookin' creetur, wid ev'y hya'r on him plastered down close ter his li'l ol' lean body, an' de whisky drappin' f'um nose an' eyes an' mouf. She cu'd 'a et him den an' dar, but she wanter have a li'l fun wid him fus', same ez cats alluz does wid de mouses befo' dey eats 'em. Seem lak dey inj'ys 'em heap mo' ef dey kin skeer 'em good fus', an' den let 'em git mos' away, an' den kotch 'em ag'in, an' maul an' pull an' wool 'em roun' 'twel de mouses is glad ter be et up an' putt ouden der mis'ry. So she tucken him an' putt him down by de fire, an' den she turn her back an' walk over ter tu'rr side whar she kin set an' watch him ter see dat he ain' git 'way. Suz! her back no sooner turnt dan Mistah Frisky-mouse jes' tucken his foot in his han' an' went clippin' over ter de hole quicker 'n a streak er greast lightnin', an' Mis' Cat she look roun' jes' in time ter see de een' uv his tail gwine down de hole.

"'Hi, dar!' sez she, 'ain' you gin me yo' wu'd ter set by de fire ontwel you dry de whisky offen yo' hide? Is dis de way you keeps yo' wu'd? Does you call dat hon'able, atter I done he'p you out?"

"Mouse he whu'l 'roun' in de hole jes' so he kin poke

MIS' CAT AND MR. FRISKY MOUSE

his nose an' eyes out a li'l ways an' see her settin' dar wid one han' lif' up, shakin' hit at him an' lookin' lak she plumb scannelize. He say, he do, 'Keep my wu'd! Who? Me? Huh-uh, Mis' Cat, heap ru'rr lose my wu'd 'dan ter lose my life. Sidesen dat, you knowed I bin drinkin'; 'deed you done foun' me clean unner de in-floons er whisky, an' you done yearn fo' now, 'kase you is no kitten, dat whisky meks mens mighty onre-



liable, dat hit do.' He git ter snickerin' an' laughin' so't he kain't say nuttin' mo', so he go scootin' down de hole an' leave Mis' Cat settin' dar wid one paw in de air an' her jaw drapt wide open.

"'De mis'able, ongrateful, owdacious li'l sinner,' sez she. Jes' den Mistah Frisky-mouse he scoot back fer a minnit an' see her settin' dar lookin' foolish, an' he laugh *an'* he yell *an'* he holler, an' jes' w'en she mek a dab at 'im wid 'er paw, he turnt tail an' went c'reerin' down de hole, singin' back at de top er his voice:

AT THE BIG HOUSE

*'Ho, ho! Mis' Cat, I thought you'z slicker
Dan ter,'pend on de wu'd uv a man in liquor.'*"

"Dear me," said Janey, "what a naughty little mouse. Was he really, really tipsy?"

"Sho!" said Aunt Nancy, "he wan't so tipsy but w'at he knowed dat Mis' Cat wuz atter him an' sot on ketchin' 'im, an' he knowed 'nuff ter git 'way f'um her, so I reckon he wan't so tipsy atter all. Dat's de way wid some wimmins," and here she rolled her eyes meaningly at Aunt 'Phrony, "dey ain' got de sense ter hide hit w'en dey's tryin' ter ketch a man, an' de man he gits skeered an' quits, an' den de ooman goes an' putts de blame on some urr gal. I tell you, honeys, you kin run atter a man all you please, but you mus'n' let him 'spishun hit er de game's up."

BROTHER SQUIRREL AND MOLLY HARE

"Now, den," said Aunt Nancy, when she had finished the story of Mis' Cat, "I reckon y'all done had 'nuff fer dis night, isn' you?"

"No, we haven't," said Ned, with an injured air. "You said you'd tell two to-night if we were good; and so I didn't do lots of things I wanted to, and I was careful about getting over the fences and only snagged my trousers once, just a teenty little hole."

"And I only took one piece of pie for dinner; I said 'No, thank you,' when they offered me another, but I wanted it all the time," said Janey, "and there were lots of things I *could* have done if I hadn't been trying to behave, and I'll go and do 'em to-morrow if you don't do what you said you would."

The old woman looked at Janey over her huge, brass-rimmed spectacles with as severe an expression as her good-natured face could assume.

"Well, I ain' de one gwine be hurt by yo' nortiness," she said, "but ef I done promuss you two tales, den I gwine gin you two, 'kase I ain' gwine back on my wu'd, even w'en chillen ac's kind er uppish wid me an' gits ter talkin' onmannerly. Dis tale is 'bout Brer Squ'l an' Mis' Molly Hyar', an' hit wuz telled ter me by de same man whar tell me 'bout Mis' Cat and Mistah Frisky-mouse.

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"He say dat in de ol', ol' times, Mis' Molly Hyar' useter wunner w'y 'twuz w'en her an' Brer Squ'l look so much lak one nu'rr, dat he live up in a tree an' she live down on de groun'. 'I'se ev'y bit ez good ez he is,' she say ter husse'f. 'I 'spose he feel mighty biggitty 'kase he live up dar in de tree, an' I reckon he kind er look down on groun'-walkers lak me. But I boun' you I gwine teck him down a peg er two nex' time I see 'im. Mis'able li'l skeezicks! So proud er dat bushy tail dat he all time r'arin' hit up clean over his haid so'st folks kin see hit.' She talk dat-a-way 'kase she right tetchy 'bout her own tail whar got nipt off shawt one'r dem times w'en she wuz up ter some uv her 'havishness.

"Las', one day, she met up wid 'im at de foot uv a tree. He wuz settin' up gnorrin' a nut an' turnin' hit roun' an' roun' in his li'l paws. She stop' an' squat down on her ha'nches an' pass de time er day wid 'im. 'Howdy, Brer Squ'l,' she say, an' he stop' gnorrin' an' hilt de nut in one li'l paw an' 'spon', 'Howdy, ma'am, howdy,' 'kase he wuz a mighty mannerly li'l feller an' oon go on eatin' w'iles dar wuz a lady roun'.

"Den, he say: 'Mis' Molly, won't you please, ma'am, come up ter my house in de tree an' mek yo'se'f comf'ble an' at home? I be proud ter see you in my house, ma'am.'

"'Naw, thanky, suh,' sez she; 'I come a right fur ways to-day, an' I ain' feel ekal ter de climbin'; ain' ez young ez I onct wuz, Brer Squ'l.' She talk dat-a-way 'kase she ain' wanter let on dat she wan't use ter climbin' trees.

"Pres'n'y she say, sort er sniffin' an' turnin' up her nose all de time she talkin': 'Brer Squ'l, you an' me



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sut'n'y look sump'n lak one nu'rr, but seem ter me hit's on'y skin deep; we ain' ac' nuttin' 't all de same. You eats nuts an' I eats gyardin-truck; you lives in a hole in de tree, an' I lives in a hole in de groun'; an' I reckon I kin do a heap er things you kain't do. 'Pears ter me 'bout de on'ies' thing you kin do is ter run up a tree.'

"Brer Squ'l he drap de nut an' hang bofe paws, kind er meek an' numble, an' he say, sezee: 'Fur be hit f'um me ter say dat I is de ekal uv a nice lady lak Mis' Molly Hyar'. But please, ma'am, ter show me some er de things you kin do, 'kase I done year tell dat you is a monst'ous spry ooman.'

"Molly she snigger at dat an' say: 'G'long 'way f'um yer, Brer Squ'l, w'at you want er bamboozle a po' ooman fer, wid yo' flattersome wu'ds? You men-folks orter be 'shame' er yo'se'f; 'deed you ort.'

"Squ'l he say, sezee: 'Wellum, you kin b'lieve hit er not, but I alluz means w'at I sez; an' de nabers'll all tell you de same. I wuz bawnded yer, las' 'ear, an' brung up right in dis tree, an' dey all knows me right well.'

"'Well, ef you talkin' de trufe,' sez she, sniggerin' ag'in lak she still feel kind er backwu'ds 'bout hit, dough all de time she wuz jes' a-honin' ter show husse'f off; 'well, ef dat de trufe, den I gwine whu'l in an' show you some tricks whar is tricks sho'-'nuff; hit teks *me* ter do 'em.' Wid dat she turnt husse'f aloose, an' uv all de gwines-on you uver see, dem tuck de lead. She go kitin' long a piece, an' den all uv a suddint she r'ar up on her ha'nches an' do lak she lissen; den she gin a monst'ous jump an' go on, an' den she hide, an'



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den come out ag'in; an' den she double lak de dogs atter 'er an' she wanten git 'way f'um 'em, an' she dat spry an' soople seem lak she do all dem tricks widout half tryin'.

"Brer Squ'l he monst'ous p'lite, an' he watch her clost an' pay good 'tention an' wuz mighty please' wid ev'ything. He clap his li'l paws an' say: 'Good fer you, Mis' Molly Hyar'! You sut'n'y is a sho'-nuff jumper! I boun' dar ain' nair' dog in dese parts kin run you down, Mis' Molly.'

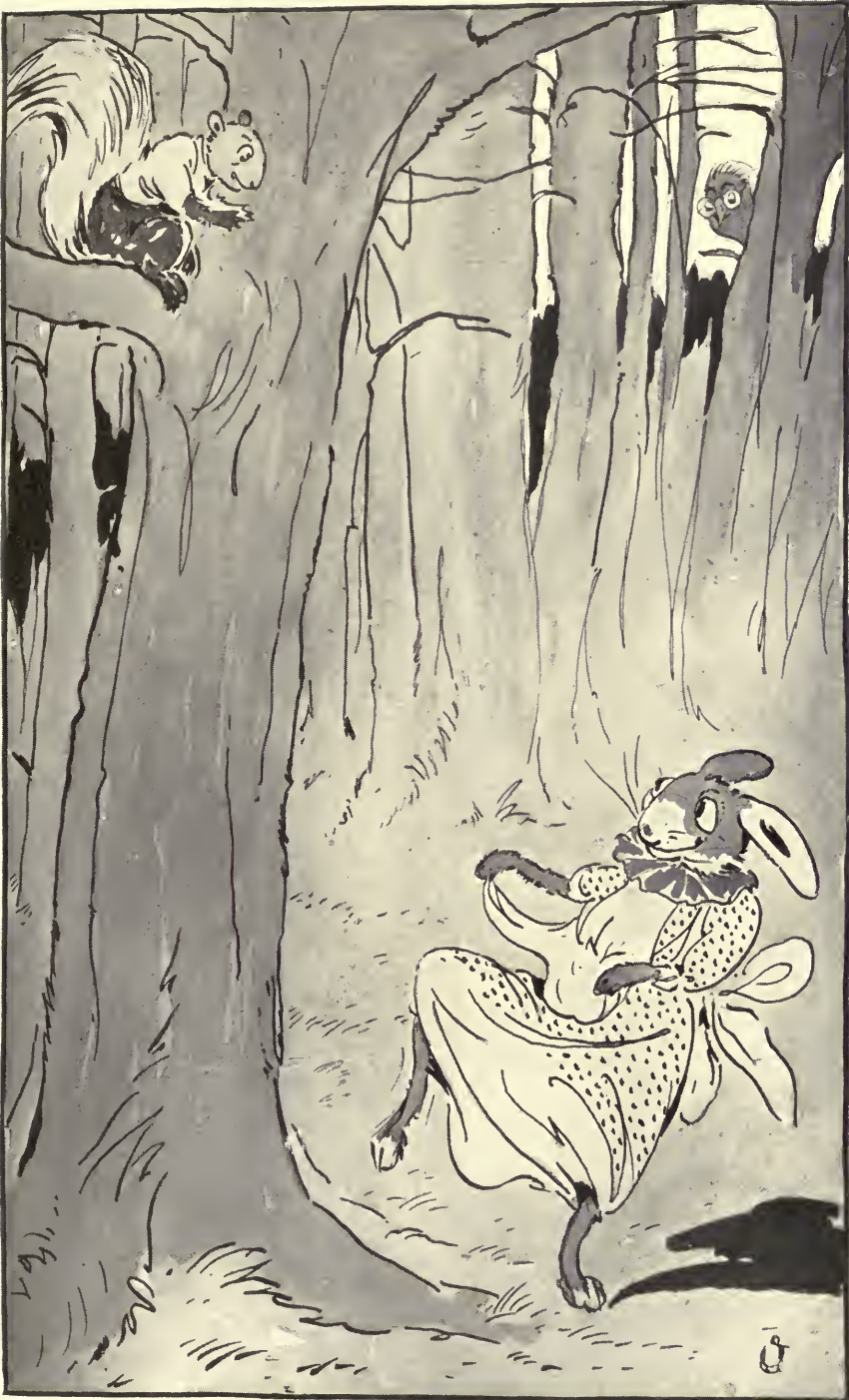
"She say: 'Oh shucks! dis ain' nuttin' 'tall. Wait 'twel I show you w'at's w'at.' An' wid dat she 'mence all over ag'in an' putt in all de extry licks she cu'd think uv, scootin' in an' out 'mong's de trees an' de bushes so fas' dat you cu'dden see no laigs ner feet, jes' look lak a wad er fur dat wuz bein' chunked roun' fer fun.

"Las', Squ'l he 'feard she gwine tire husse'f all out, 'kase he wuz a kin'-hearted li'l feller, an' he say, sezee, 'Thanky, Mis' Molly, thanky, ma'am. I much 'bleeged ter you fer showin' me yo' tricks, an' I owns up dat I kain't do one un 'em. But mebbe, ma'am, you lak ter see me run up a tree; fer you done tol' de trufe w'en you ses dat's 'bout all I kin do.'

"But, bless yo' soul, he kin do heap mo'n dat, on'y he wuz one'r dese yer modes' mens whar thinks mo' uv urr folks' doin's dan dey does uv der own, but I let you know dat lots er times dey kin do mo' dan de peoples whar meks sech 'miration over derse'fs.

"He kite up de tall tree same'z ef he wuz runnin' on de groun', an' w'en he git dar he do all sawts er things. He pick nuts an' swing back an' fo'th on de een' uv a limb, an' jump f'um one tree to anu'rr widout losin'





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his baluns er fallin' onct. Den he spread out his fo' laigs wide ez he kin an' jump f'um de highes' limb clean to the groun' widout hurtin' him 't all, an' wuz up de tree ag'in befo' Mis' Molly cu'd wink her eyeleds. Nex', he run down de tree haid fo'most, jes' ez easy ez he run up. Den back ag'in ter swing some mo' an' hang on by one paw an' turn a somerset on de limb, an' a hull passel uv urr tricks.

"Mis' Hyar' she wan't so pleasan' an' p'lite ez Brer Squ'l bin. She ain' say nuttin' nice 'bout his tricks, jes' set down dar below, squatulatin' wid 'im an' rollin' her eyes up an' wringin' her paws an' sayin' over an' over ag'in: 'Brer Squ'l don' min', he kill hisse'f! Brer Squ'l don' min', he kill hisse'f! Gwine fall ker-smack down an' snag hisse'f on dis stump! Please, suh, ter stop! hit gin me de flirtation er de heart ter see you do dat-a-way! I gwine go right 'long home dis minnit ef you don' quit dem gwines-on an' come down f'um dar.' She go on lak dat 'kase she ain' got sense 'nuff ter know he wuz jes' ez much at home up dar ez w'at she wuz on de groun', an' dat his tricks wuz jes' ez natchel an' easy fer him ez w'at hern wuz fer her. De trouble wid her wuz she think she know hit all.

"Pres'n'y Mis' Jinny Wren, whar live up in de same tree an' wuz gre't fren's wid Brer Squ'l, she git tired er lis'nin' at Mis' Hyar's foolishness, an' she say ter husse'f, she do, 'I gwine mek up a song 'bout dat fool ooman an' sing hit out good an' loud, so's't she'll know someb'dy else year her gwines-on sidesen dat nice li'l Brer Squ'l whar don' 'spicion nob'dy. I 'low hit teck one ooman ter see daylight thu anu'rr. Dese mens don' seem ter be up ter de bizness.'



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"Wid dat she cle'rd her th'oat a li'l an' sung a note
er two ter git de pitch, an' den she stick her haid outen
a hole in de tree an' sing out loud 'z she kin,

*'Squ'l he jump f'um limb ter limb,
Ol' Hyar' sot an' look at him;
Ol' Hyar' say onto husse'f,
Dat Squ'l don' min' he kill hisse'f.' "*

"And what did Molly Hare do then?" asked Ned.

"Law, honey, she wuz dat mad at bein' overyearn by
nu'rr ooman dat she jes' ga'rrd husse'f toge'rr an' lit
out fer home, same 'z I gotter do dis ve'y minnit er my
ol' man bè sendin' one'r de gran'chillen ter fin' me. I
kain't stay yer runnin' on all night, an' dat sut'n'y is
yo' maw I year callin'. Ef y'all don' g'long back ter
de house I boun' you she gin you a dose er w'at Paddy
gin de drum; y'all know w'at dat wuz."

WHY THE BUZZARD IS BALD

One day the children dropped into Aunt 'Phrony's cabin and found her sitting before the fire with her dog, Snap, curled up at her feet. Little Kit climbed up on her lap, put his little arms about her neck, and laying his soft, pink cheek against her dusky one, begged for "anuzzer giant story." Aunt 'Phrony's was not a very responsive nature, but she could not resist the endearments of the pretty baby-boy. She hugged him fast, stroking his curls and declaring he should have what he wanted if she had to "bust her breens" to recall it for him. Her brains stood the strain, however, for she soon announced to the little boy, "Now, den, my lamb, my honey-bud, I gwine gin you a story 'bout de race 'twix' Mistah Deer an' Mistah Tukkey, an' w'ile 'tain' so much all 'bout a giant, yit dar's a giant comes inter hit.

"One time de Deer an de Tukkey wuz gwine have a race. Mos' de creeturs thought dish yer wuz plumb reedikelous, 'kase de Deer wuz knowed ez de swif'es' uv all de beas'eses an' hit seem ter dem dat Tukkey wuz settin' hisse'f up might'ly ter race wid sech a runner ez w'at de Deer wuz knowed ter be. Dey ses, 'Um-umph! jes' look at dat feller's li'l haid an' you kin see w'y he talk foolish; ain't got room fer mo'n a thimbleful er breens. He dunno B f'um bull's foot. Struts

AT THE BIG HOUSE

roun' an' swells hisse'f up an' looks mighty proud an' biggitty, but jes' let him open his mouf an' talk an' you kin look in thu de crack an' fin' out how empty his haid is inside.'

"But yit, atter all, de Tukkey wuz a right swif' bu'd in dem days, an' so w'en de creeturs all met toge'rr ter bet on de race dar wuz some un 'em w'at putt der bets on de Tukkey."

"I thought betting was wrong," interrupted little Miss Janey, with her most knowing air.

"So 'tis, so 'tis," said Aunt 'Phrony. "Is you uver year me say 'twuz right? Hits plumb wrong, but de creeturs done hit, jes' the same ez men does; you kain't 'spec' dem ter be better dan w'at men is, dough I ain' so sho', atter all, but w'at dey is better. De beas'eses 'ud be 'shame' ter kyar' on de way some humans does, dat dey would. Anyhows, de creeturs sut'n'y bet on dat race. Ev'yb'dy wuz dar, an' some er de fowels betted on de Deer an' some er de beas'eses betted on de Tukkey, but mos' er de bu'ds wuz fer der own man, Mistah Tukkey, an' mos' er de beas'eses wuz fer Mistah Deer.

"Mistah Coon wuz struttin' roun', mighty empawtant, tryin' ter git folks ter bet wid 'im. 'I lay you five ter one on Mistah Deer; come on any un you dat ain' 'feard ter putt up,' sezee, 'I'se teckin' all de bets I kin git dis mawnin'.

"'Done!' sez de Owl, sezee, an' dey bofe went an' han'ed over der proputtty ter de wimmin-folks dat wuz teekin' charge er all de stuff whar bin betted; dar wuz a gre't pile uv hit layin' on de groun' wid de wimmins keepin' gyard over hit. Lots er things changed han's dat day, I kin tell you. Even Mistah Ant done brung



WHY THE BUZZARD IS BALD

sump'n ter putt up, an' 'twuz neener mo' ner less dan a daid caterpillar, dough you cu'd sca'cely tell hit fer dat, 'kase he done pull out ev'y single hya'r so's't he cu'd drag hit down de hole whar he live."

"Pshaw! Aunt 'Phrony," said Ned, "ants don't really do that, do they?"

"Well, I dunno w'at-all ants does," she answered, "but I knows I saw some dat I wuz watchin' one day do dat ve'y thing. Dey brung Mistah Caterpillar ter de ant-hill an' tried ter drag him down de hole wid all his fuzz on, an' w'en dey foun' dat oon do, dey jes' natchelly went ter wu'k an' pulled ev'y hya'r out, an' w'ats mo' dey lef' 'em layin' in two straight lines on each side er de body, an' den dey drug him down de hole. Dem ants is de smartes' creeturs in de worl', ef dey is 'mong's de li'les'.

"Well, now, 'bout dat race. Ev'ybd'y wuz dar, an' dar wuz a gran' talkin' an' buzzin' an' hummin' f'um ev'y sort er voice dat de creeturs talk in, an' dar wuz some fussin' an' quoinin'; dat sho' ter be wharuver any bettin' gwine on. Ol' Buzzu'd he wuz settin' up on a bare limb waitin' ter gin de wu'd fer de race ter 'mence, 'kase he wuz 'p'inted fer ter be de jedge. Jes' den up come a giant ter watch de race, an' he year Mistah Lion gwine struttin' an' r'arin' 'bout, an' he lissen ter w'at he say.

"'Hi, yi!' sez de Lion, sezee, 'I ain' gwine putt up none er my propputty. W'ats a li'l bit er truck lak dat in yon' pile, whar no pusson wants, atter all? I'se so sho' Mistah Deer gwine beat dat I'se willin' ter putt up my life 'gins' any fool dat 'll resk his life on dat numb-skull, Mistah Wi'yum Wil'-tukkey. Reckon I orter

AT THE BIG HOUSE

know how fas' Mistah Dapple-deer kin go ; I done chase him often 'nuff.'



"Nob'dy spoke up, 'kase dey wuz all mighty 'feard er Mistah Lion an' know dey ain' got much chanet w'en hit come ter tryin' der life 'gins' his. So ev'thing wuz

WHY THE BUZZARD IS BALD

mighty quiet all ter onct, an' Lion he kep' on roarin' an' struttin' an' axin' some un ter bet der life wid him. Jes' den 'long come a giant, one'r dese yer sho'-nuff giants whar got strenk 'nuff ter pull up a hill by de roots an' walk off wid hit ef dey wanster. He year w'at Lion sayin' an' he tuck up de bet. 'I putts my life on de Tukkey,' sezee. 'I'se yo' man, Mistah Lion, an' I don' kyare who knows hit, dats me. I'll putt my life 'gins' de hull kit an' bilin', ef you sesso, an' not turn a hya'r in de doin',' sezee.

"Lion he gin a scawnful sniff dat wuz half snort an' half roar, an' he say, he do, 'Well, ef dat don' beat bob-tail! Dish yer human creetur ter set hisse'f up 'gin' me! Seem lak I sca'cely kin keep f'um diggin' my claws inter him dish yer ve'y minnit. Some er you fellers bes' come an' hol' me down 'twel de race is over,' sezee. I let yer know dat none er de fellers 'cepted dat eenvite, dough; dey lef' him ter hisse'f, walkin' up an' down, frailin' de air wid his tail an' wu'kkin' his claws in an' out lak he 'z gittin' good an' raidy.

"Jes' 'bout den ol' Jedge Bizzy Buzzu'd he gin de wu'd ter start, an' den Deer an' Tukkey wuz off lak shots, an' ev'yb'dy craned der necks atter 'em an' fergot all 'bout de Lion an' de giant. At fus' Deer he wuz way in de lead, but 'long 'bout middle-ways er de co'se Tukkey he 'mence ter creep up on 'im, an' bless goodness, he kotch up an' kep' even wid him an' jes' 'fo' dey got ter de een' ef he ain' come out a deer's lenk ahaid uv him. All dem whar bin bettin' on de Tukkey sont up a gre't cheer, an' Jedge Bizzy Buzzu'd he say, sezee, 'Ladiz an' gemmen, feller creeturs er dese diggin's, you done seed fit ter 'p'int me ter de 'pawtant office er jedge on dis

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'casion, w'ich office I done fill ter de bes' er my disabil'ty, an' I hope hit gwine be sassifact'ry ter you all w'en I 'nounce dat ow' fren', Mistah Wi'yum Wil'-tukkey is de winner er dis race, all fa'r an' squar', comin' out jes' one lenk ahaid uv ow' 'spected fren', Mistah Dapple-deer. You is all now reques' ter step up ter de pile an' teck yo' goods whar you betted fer; de ladiz gwine see dat you git w'at comin' ter you. I don' wanter year 'bout none er you snougin' an' snatchin' w'at don' b'long to you. Le's be mannerly 'bout dis. You, Mistah Lion! You, Mistah Giant! Come 'way f'um dat pile! You got no bizness dar. Yo' 'greemint wuz ter bet yo' lifes on dis, an' we-all wanster see you come on an' fill de contrac'. I'se settin' yer ter see fa'r play an' I gwine do hit, ef I hatter be turn down at de nex' 'leckshun fer doin' hit. Dats w'at a jedge is fer, ter see fa'r play, an' I wants y'all ter know hit. Dis way, Mistah Lion; dis way, Mistah Giant.'

"Den de giant he step fo'th an' he say, sezee, 'Well, Mistah Lion, dish yer's whar I reckon I gotter teck yo' life.'

"Lion he roar hisse'f hoarse an' bristle up his mane, an' he say, sezee, 'Now lissen at dat fool man! He ain' nuver run up ag'in my claws er he oon talk lak dat. Jes' wait ontwel I hook 'em inter him an' you 'll year him laugh on tu'rr side uv his mouf. Who dat you gwine teck his life? Me? Now I stan's befo' all dese folks an' I axes you ter come on an' do hit.'

"Wid dat de giant he retch down an' pick up de Lion by de scruff er de neck an' dash him hard on de groun', an' w'en dey all come a-runnin', dar wuz de gre't Mistah Lion stretch out on de yearf, stone daid. Dey all mek

WHY THE BUZZARD IS BALD

gre't 'miration, but dey ain' was'e many tears over 'im, 'kase dey wuz all so 'feard uv him, dat mos' uv 'em wuz glad ter git shed uv him.

"Jedge Bizzy Buzzu'd he mek 'em a li'l speech. He say, sezee, 'My fren's, ef I ain' stuck ter my p'int an' done my jooty, dish yer rampin', r'arin', rippin', roarin', boasin', tearin' creetur 'ud be livin' dis ve'y minnit ter set y'all shakin' an' quakin'. Dars no 'nyin' dat fac'; I wants y'all ter 'member dat nex' time you has 'casion ter 'p'int anu'rr jedge. An' now I mus' come down offen dis perch an' tell y'all "so long," 'kase I sees some mighty p'tickler bizness waitin' fer me over yonner in dat fur fiel'."

"Wid dat Jedge Buzzu'd flopped his wings an' flewed off an' lef' de creeturs ter talk de marter over, an' I boun' you der tongues wagged scannelous. De fowels whar betted on Mistah Dapple-deer an' los' wuz plumb 'stunded wid de 'cision Jedge Buzzu'd mek in de case. 'Lawdy, lawdy!' dey sez, 'te think er dat ol' ninkum settin' up ter know mo'n we-all an' passin' jedgments fer us! We'll be switched ef we set down unner no sech ez dat. Now see yer, w'at we gwine do 'bout dis? Mistah Tarry-long Tarr'pin, you orter be de one ter teck dat fowel down, 'kase you done owe him a gredge uver sence de time he mek de 'cision 'gins' you w'en you race wid de hummin'-bu'd. Mistah Lion he daid an' gone; he kain't settle Jedge Buzzu'd's hash fer him, so now we gwine putt ow' 'pennance on you.'

"Tarr'pin he study a w'ile an' den he say, 'Gemmen, I wish you ain' spring dis on me so suddintly. Seem lak hit drive all de idees outen my haid. You orter tol' me 'bout dis sooner, den mebbe I moughter had



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sump'n raidy. Y'all have ter wait now ontwel I sees my way cle'r. Time, time, gimme time; seem lak I ain' nuver had 'nuff er dat yit. But ef you'll do dat, I'll promuss ter do de bes' I kin, an' dats all I *ken* do.'

'Dey sez to 'im, 'Teck all de time dey is, Mistah Tarry-long, jes' so you fix him out in de een'. Git yo'se'f a good raidy an' den whu'l in an' teck him down so fur 't he'll know jes' who he is.'

'Wid dat dey all up an' go home, an' f'um dat time on Tarry-long he study an' he study an' he study 'bout Jedge Bizzy Buzzu'd. Las' one day he come 'long an' seed ol' Buzzu'd layin' fas' asleep in de heat er de day, teekin' a noonin' under a tree. He crope up closter an' he year Buzzu'd snorin' 'way lak a steam injin' an' ev'y now an' den lettin' out a li'l puff er a snort. 'De laws an' de prophits!' sezee, 'lissen at dat ol' man, 'nuff ter 'sturb de hull naberhoods. Nemmine, suits my time prezackly.'

'He sot dar a w'ile laughin' at Jedge Buzzu'd, 'kase he look plumb reedikelous wid his footses stickin' up in de air an' his mouf wide open. Den he crope up an' he crope up an' he try ol' Buzzu'd by ticklin' 'im on de toes, but de Jedge wuz so fas' asleep dat he jes' drord 'em up a li'l an' gin a extry loud puff an' den went on 'tendin' ter his breathin'. Den Tarr'pin he crope up closter yit an' tuck a hull han'ful er li'l insect's an' putt 'em on Buzzu'd's haid, an' den he crope off an' went home fas' ez he cu'd, w'ich 'twan't no faster dan de law 'low.

'Jedge Buzzu'd sut'n'y had a time wid his haid. Dem norty li'l insect's ain' lef' him no peace day ner night, an' de long an' de shawt uv hit wuz dat he los' ev'y hya'r outen his haid, an' he bin gwine roun' bald-haided

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uver sence. You kin see 'im mos' any day in de 'ear perch' up in a ol' daid tree, wid his haid all bare ter de sun an' de wind an' de rain, lookin' mighty sollumcholly an' thinkin' over dem ol' days w'en he ac' de part er jedge fer de creeturs an' dey snatch him bald-haided fer his pains."

THE 'POSSUM AND THE GRUB-WORM

At the close of the story Aunt 'Phrony mildly reproved Ned for teasing Snip and Snap, her cat and dog, and Janey hastened to turn attention from him by saying the first thing that came into her head. "Oh, Aunt 'Phrony," she cried, "you haven't told us anything about the 'Possum for a long time. Don't you know any more stories about him?"

If 'Phrony saw through the simple device by which Janey meant to kill two birds with one stone, she made no sign, but obligingly racked her brains for more news of the 'Possum's doings. At length she was able to remember a story about "Mis' 'Possum" and "Mistah Grub-wu'm."

"Dey wuz bofe un 'em mighty fat folks, an' lak lots er fat folks, dey wuz right lazy an' nuver go nowhars dey ain' hatter go, jes' mosey roun' a li'l ter git der vittles an' stay still at home de res' er de time, w'ile tu'rr creeturs all time traipsin' an' trollopin' up an' down de kyountry ter see w'at dey kin see an' year w'at dey kin year an' do w'at dey kin do. Mis' 'Possum she stay in a holler tree an' snooge de time away, an' Mistah Grub-wu'm he snuggle down jes' beneaf de top er de groun' an' dream 'bout de time he gwine turn inter a beetle an' live on top de groun'."

"Do grubs turn into beetles?" asked Ned, rather incredulously.



Mis' 'Possum She Stan' In Her Do'

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"Yas, suh, dat dey does! dish yer one w'at I tell 'bout, he lays low un'need de yearf 'twel May er June an' den comes out an' turns inter one'r dese yer pocty green an' brown beetles whar dey calls 'June beetles'; de kin' chillen ketches an' sets ter junin'."

Of course the little folks wanted to know what "junin'" was.

"Laws-a-mussy!" said 'Phrony, "I thought all chillen knowed how ter june a bug. W'y, you jes' tecks de beetle an' ties a string to 'im an' hol's on ter one een' er de string an' lets him fly ter de urr een' er de string, an' den he hums an' buzzes an' fusses an' cusses, an' dat's w'at dey calls 'junin'."

"Now, den, lemme start ag'in. I done tol' you dat Mistah Grub-wu'm an' Mis' 'Possum wuz bofe un 'em fat an' lazy an' lak ter stay home. But dey mighty fond er knowin' w'at gwine on in de worl', an' w'en tu'rr creeturs go ter de kyouncil ter 'tend ter de 'fairs er de kyountry, dese yer stay-at-homes ain' gin 'em no peace, w'en dey git back, pesterin' 'em wid queschins 'bout w'at went on at de kyouncil. One time some er de creeturs wuz gwine by f'um de meetin', an' Mis' 'Possum she stan' in her do' an' hail 'em an' ax 'em fer ter come in an' set a w'ile.

"Dey ses, ' 'Scuse we-all, ma'am, we 'bleeged fer ter be gittin' on,' an' dey ses ter one nu'rr behime der han's: 'Land! land! le's mek has'e an' git outer dis er dat ooman'll nab us an' nail us ter de cheers all night.'

"Mis' 'Possum she say, sez she: 'Gemmen, I ain' gwine teck no fer a arnser. You-all mus' be plumb frazzle out wid yo' walk. You mus' come in an' teck off yo' shoes an' res' yo' hufs, an' den lemme gin you a

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plate er 'simmons an' a glass er buttermilk. Now, you year me, I ain' gwine let you off.'

"De vittles fetched 'em, lak hit alluz does wid de men-folks, an' in dey came. Mis' 'Possum she ax 'em queschins 'bout who wuz dar an' w'at dey wo' an' w'at dey have ter eat, an' w'at laws bin pass', ontwel dey wuz fair' wil'. Dey git so wo' out an' agger vex dat w'en she go outer de room ter fetch de 'simmons an' de buttermilk, dey git ter collogin' toge'rr an' fix up a li'l joke on her. W'en she come back she putt down de plate an' de glasses, an' putt her han's on her hips an' stood watchin' 'em eat, talkin' at 'em all de time.

"'Dellaws!' she say, 'y'all ain' gin me no news wuf talkin' 'bout. Is dat all you kin 'member er de doin's?'

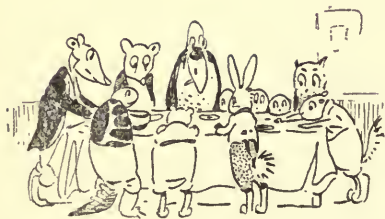
"'Den one un 'em he wink at de res' an' he say, he do, 'Law, bless yo' soul, Mis' 'Possum, I nigh mos' fergit ter tell you de kyouncil done pass a law dat all de anermuels mus' pervide deyse'fs wid a pouch so'st dey kin kyar' der chillen roun' wid 'em.'

"'Fer de lan's sake!' sez she, 'how I gwine git me any pouch ter kyar' roun' wid me?'

"'Nemmine,' dey sez; 'we bring you de hide; all you gotter do be ter mek de pouch.'

"So dat w'at dey do, an' Mis' 'Possum she strukken wid de notion dat she save husse'f de trouble er kyar'yin' de bag on 'er arm ef she jes' sew hit to 'er body instid, so, sho'z yo' bawn, she jes' sew hit on her own hide, right in front, an' dar whar she bin kyar'yin' her chillen uver sence. Tu'rr creeturs raise a big hoot w'en dey see 'er gwine roun' lak dat, de onies' one 'mong's 'em all whar kyar' der young 'uns dat-a-way.

"'Mis' 'Possum ain' kyare. She say, 'Gemmen, de



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joke's on me dis time. But sho! 'tain' bodder me. You done me a mighty good turn; dis heap better dan gwine roun' totin' my chillen wid my mouf, de way some er you hatter do w'en you wanster tote yo'n.' An' so ter dis day she teck her chillen ev'ywhar she go, even w'en she go out ter rob a hen-roos'. Sometimes she lays down on de groun' in de sun, an' dey walks outer de pouch an' climbs all over her an' squats down an' hangs on by curlin' de een's er der long tails roun' her hya'r. I done seed a dozen uv 'em at onct, jes' settin' all over der mammy an' hangin' on by der tails.

"Atter de creeturs lef' Mis' 'Possum dey g'long li'l ways an' met up wid Mistah Grub-wu'm, an' he turnt to an' 'gun ter pussecoot 'em lak she bin doin'. Dey got jes' natchelly wo' out wid 'im, so dey went off a li'l piece ter confabulate toge'rr. 'Now ain' dis jes' too much!' dey ses. 'Why n't dis man go ter de kyouncil an' use his own eyes an' years? Mis'able lazybones! So fat he kain't 'ambulate, broad 'z he is long.'

"One un 'em say ter tu'rrs, 'Jes' lef' dis man ter me; I gwine show him huccome!' Den he go back an' he say ter Mistah Grub-wu'm, 'Mistah Grub, we'all done fergit ter tell you de kyouncil done pass a law dat all anermuels mus' crawl on der backs. Dey say we bin gwine roun' wid ow' eyes on de groun' long 'nuff, an' now we mus' turn over an' look up in de worl'.'

"'Umph!' sez de Grub-wu'm, sezee, 'dat suit me to a gnat's bristle, 'kase I don' reckon folks gwine 'spec' me ter git roun' so fas' ef I hatter trabel on my back. I kin teck hit easy den, sho' 'nuff. Stan' outer de way, you-all, yer goes!' Wid dat he roll over on his back an' try ter crawl. Mighty hard wu'k. He wrassel an' he



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tussel an' he tug, but he ain' mek no headways. 'Whew! dis mek me tired, sho' 'nuff. I gwine turn me over an' do de ol' way,' sezee; 'mighty easy fer folks ter set up in de high seats an' gin der orders. I wish all dem dat gin orders hatter try 'em on derse'fs befo' dey kin pass inter laws.'

"He try ter turn back on his stummick, but, bless yo' soul, dar wan't no turn to him. He huff an' he puff, but 'twan't no use. De creeturs dey stood by an' snickered an' aiged him on an' let on ter try an' he'p him. Las' dey cu'dden stan' hit no longer, an' dey bus' out laughin' an' sez, 'Heyo, Mistah Grub, we done got you fix' dis time. Reckon you won't go pesterin' we-all no mo' wid yo' queschins 'bout de kyouncil. You hatter trabel all de way dar on yo' back atter dis ef you wanter know w'at gwine on. You kain't 'pend on we-all no mo'. So-long, ol' man.'

"Sence den ol' Grub-wu'm bin doin' all his walkin' on his back, an' he bin at hit so long now dat he done got right spry. Sometimes atter a haivy rain he come up ter de top er de groun', an' you kin see him jes' mo'n scootin' roun' on his back.

"Now dat's all de tales you gwine git outen me dis day. I is plumb wo' out, same 'z de creeturs wuz wo' out, wid queschins."

Just then little Kit gave Aunt 'Phrony an unlucky hit on the elbow from a stick with which he was playing. She seemed more put out than the occasion warranted, but explained it by saying that if your crazy-bone was hit you were sure to be disappointed. Ned, who was a very matter-of-fact young person, inclined to believe only in the things he saw, wanted to know if she really

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believed in signs like that. As on a previous occasion, she expressed firm faith and added that she believed there was scarcely anything which happened that was not a sign if you only knew how to read it aright.

"Urr folks," she said, "has tuck notuss er dat sidesen me, an' dey done putt 'em inter rhymes an' jingles an' sech, so 't folks kin 'member 'em better. Mebbe I kin gin you some un 'em. Lessee, dar's one ses,

*'Right han' itch, rub on wood
An' say, come good, come good, come good;
Lef' han' itch, rub on brass
An' say, come fas', come fas', come fas'.'*

"Ef you'll say dem wu'ds an' blow on yo' han' an' den shet hit tight you gwine git a present, sho', sooner er later. Ef yo' years itch, some un talkin' 'bout you an' you mus' say ter yo'se'f,

*'Talk good, good betide you;
Talk bad, devil ride you.'*

"Ef yo' eye itch, you gwine see a stranger, an' ef yo' mouf itch you gwine git a kiss f'um a stranger. Sho! dar's mo' signs dan you kin shake a stick at, but you kain't 'spec' me ter think 'em all up ter onct. I done gin you 'nuff fer one time."

MR. HARE, MR. MINK AND MIS' DUCK

"Aunt 'Phrony," said Ned one day, "do you know any stories about Mis' Duck?"

"W'at mek you think 'bout her?" she asked.

"Oh," said he, "I saw her waddlin' roun' the yard the other day and I wondered why you had never told us any story about her."

"Sho! chil'," said she, "w'at you reckon I want'er study 'bout dat li'l ol' no-kyount quackin' fool fer? I'se gittin' too ol' ter let my min' run on 'bout sech foolishness ez dem ol' tales, anyhow. Me wid one foot on dry lan' an' one in de grave; I orter be thinkin' 'bout dish yer uverlas'in' soul er mine ev'y minnit I ain' hatter think 'bout meat an' drink an' kiverin' fer dis po' ol' pe'ishin' body er mine."

"Oh," said Ned apologetically, "I never thought about its being foolishness. I like your stories a lot, and I know there are not many people can tell them the way you can, unless it's Aunt Nancy."

It was nice of Ned to be loyal to the absent Aunt Nancy, but her name at once ruffled Aunt 'Phrony, for she went on: "I reckon you mought know 'twuz foolishness w'atuver dat ooman tell you. Sidesen dat, knowin' is one thing an' tellin's anu'rr. Mebbe I knows tales 'bout Mis' Duck, but mebbe I ain' think hit wuf de w'ile ter tell 'em."

The children proceeded to offer bribes with a view

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to making it worth Aunt 'Phrony's while. Janey produced the battered brass thimble with which she was wont to force a great spike of a needle through her doll-rags. Ned offered his best "agate," and little Kit offered a kiss as the only marketable thing in his possession. The kiss carried the day, and, after the old woman had filled and lighted her pipe and taken a few preliminary puffs, she began:

"One time Mistah Hyar' met up wid Mistah Mink an' he putt out his paw an' shuk han's an' made his-se'f monst'ous fren'ly, an' done lak he thought Mink was a mighty nice sort er feller, but all de time he wuz s'archin' roun' in his min' ter fin' some way er ru'rr ter show his own se'f off an' let Mistah Mink know how smart *he* wuz, 'kase he wan't nuver sassified lessen he let people know 'bout dat. Las' he say: 'Mistah Mink, dish yer mighty fine day; le's we-all teck a li'l walk to-ge'rr. S'posen we sasshay roun' by de pond.'

"Mink he say he jes' ez lief go dat-a-way, ef not ru'rr, 'kase de pond seem mighty home-lak ter him; so dey walk on an' dey walk on an' las' dey git ter de pond an' dar wuz a nice big flock er ducks floatin' roun' in de water, so still dat hit seem lak dey ain' stirrin'. Dey look lak dey'z so lazy dat 'twuz come-day-go-day wid 'em; you oon a-knowed dey wuz scrabblin' roun' fer der vittles 'lessen some un tol' you.

"Hyar' he watch 'em a w'ile an' den he say: 'Mistah Mink,' sezee, 'I don' wanter show too much cur'osity, suh, but jes' 'twix' fren' an' fren' I lak ter ax you how you gits yo' livin'? I see you lookin' right plump an' peart fer a man er yo' build, an' I lak ter know de w'ys an' de wharfo's.'

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“‘W’y, sut’n’y,’ sez de Mink, sezee: ‘I gits my livin’ right outer dat pond widout no trouble ’t all. W’en I wants me sump’n ter eat, I jes’ whu’l right in an’ git me a duck.’

“‘Hyar’ wuz sniffin’ away ter hisse’f, kinder scawnfal, but he say ter Mink, mighty p’lately, he do: ‘You don’ sesso! Well, Mistah Mink, I lak ter know jes’ how you do dat. Please, suh, ter show me how you ketch duck; I bin yearin’ all my days w’at a gre’t han’ you is at duck-ketchin.’

“‘Dat mek Mink feel kind er good, an’ he say, sezee, ‘Well, den, jes’ watch me clost, an’ I reckon mebbe you’ll be able ter do it in de same lak manner.’

“‘Mink he slipped inter de water an’ dove clean unner ter whar de ducks wuz a-floatin’, an’ dey ain’ even know he wuz near ’em. Den he ketched one uv ’em by de laig an’ jes’ natchelly pulled her un’need de water an’ drug her over ter whar Mistah Hyar’ wuz waitin’.

“‘‘Uh-huh, Mistah Mink,’ sezee, ‘ve’y good; you has did dat mighty slick, suh; but I boun’ you I kin do dat same de ve’y fus’ lick widout de practuss you bin havin’ all yo’ days. De on’ies’ thing needed yer is ter be handy an’ quick, suh; handy an’ quick;’ an’ he twis’ up de cornders uv his mufstarsh wid one han’ an’ look mighty knowin’.

“‘‘All right, suh,’ sez Mink, sezee; ‘sail in an’ lemme see how you gwine do de deed,’ sezee. ‘Mebbe you kin do hit all right de fus’ time,’ sezee, ‘but I don’ b’lieve in none er dese yer nigh-cuts, myse’f. My spe’yunce is dat you hatter go roun’ de long way ef you wanter do a thing well.’

“‘Dar wuz a log layin’ in de water nigh ter whar de

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ducks wuz, an' Hyar' he mosey roun' ter de place an' wade out inter de water an' clum up on de log, thinkin' he'd stan' dar an' grab fer a duck dat-a-way. But dat de time his gun miss fire. He nab at de neares' duck, but sho! he los' his baluns an' fell inter de water ker-splash! an' come mighty nigh gittin' drowned. De ducks dey yearn de noise an' hollered an' quacked an' flew'd off ter tu'rr side de pond. One'r de young ducks whar wuz jes' out fer her fus' swim, she say ter one'r de ol' uns: 'Quack, quack, quack! Mis' Duck, dat wuz a gre't splash we done yearn. Mus' 'a bin a mighty big frog jumped inter de pond.' 'Umph,' sez de ol' lady, 'frog! I say frog! You gotter l'arn dat frogs don' wear fur er you'll nuver have no peace ner comfu't in dis pond. Dunno frogs yit w'en you see 'em, an' gotter mek yo' livin' frog-huntin'! I lak dat!'



"'Wellum,' sez de young un, 'dis my fus' trip ter de pond; you kain't 'spec' me ter know all you does, in a minnit.'

"Dat sort er please' de ol' un, so she stop jawin' an' dey all went on wid der frog-huntin'.

"Hyar' he clim' up de bank mo' daid dan alive, wid ev'y hya'r stickin' ter his hide and de water runnin' offen him lak rain. He wuz right aggervex', 'kase hyar's don' lak ter wet der footses none too well. He gin his-se'f a shake an' he sez, sezee, 'Shucks! dem de triflines' ducks I uver see, frightened ef a man sheks his li'l finger at 'em; an' dat ol' log so slipp'y you hatter have claws ef you want'er hol' onter hit.'

"'Nemmine, Mistah Hyar',' sez de Mink, sezee, 'you mus' try yo' luck ag'in. You mustn' gin up on de fus' try. I gwine swim roun' on tu'rr side de ducks an'

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drive de hull cumboodle back dis side, an' you mus' stan' raidy ter ketch one, fer I boun' you shell have duck fer yo' dinner.'

"Co'se Hyar' wan't gwine let on he'z stumped, so he say sort er kyar'less: 'Oh well, so be ef you sesso, 'tain' gwine faze me ter ketch one'r dem li'l no-kyount ducks; me dat bin hoein' my own row uver sence I wuz knee-high to a hopper-grass. I gwine nab her dis time, you kin lemme 'lone fer dat.'



"Mink he swimm'd off, an' Rabbit he go up on de bank an' git him a long piece er dat brambly vine dey calls de debil's-shoe-string. Well, he tuck an' tuck de piece er debil's-shoe-string an' crope down inter de water wid hit 'twel he wuz hidden, all but his nose an' eyes. Yer come ol' Mink drivin' de ducks dat way. One un 'em come sailin' to'des Mistah Hyar' an' he jes' natchelly grabbed her by de laig an' hilt her w'ile he tied her laig wid de debil's-shoe-string. She quacked an' she hollered an' she flapped an' she flew'd, but yit ol' Hyar' hung onder de brier. 'No use ter kick, ma'am,' sezee, 'kase I done got you dis time an' I gwine hol' onder you.'

"'Um-umph! I gwine show you huccome,' sez Duck, sez she, an' she flew'd up an' she flew'd up, an' Hyar' went spinnin' an' whu'lin' an' kickin', yit he ain' let go. Mink he wuz stannin' down below jes' a-hollerin' an' a-laughin', clappin' his han's on his knees an' doublin' hisse'f up lak a jack-knife. He sing out: 'Hi-yi! Mistah Hyar', you done got up in de worl', sho' 'nuff. You bin right uppish befo' now; I don' reckon you gwine speak wid common folks atter dis.'



MR. HARE, MR. MINK AND MIS' DUCK

" 'I'll speak wid you w'en I git back f'um dis trip; I tell you dat, p'in'-blank,' yells ol' Hyar', lettin' go wid one han' long 'nuff ter shek his fis' at Mistah Mink. Mink he stood watchin' 'em 'twel dey wan't nuttin' but a speck. Duck she flew'd an' she flew'd an' she flew'd, an' Hyar' hilt on 'twel he thought his paws gwine drap off. He argyfy wid her an' baig an' baig her please, ma'am, ter light an' let him go; but she jes' quack an' say: 'Kain't year you, suh; kain't year you. You hatter speak louder, my years ain' w'at dey useter wuz.'

"Las' he cu'dden hang on no longer an' he seed dey wuz right over a ol' sickymo' tree, an' he let go an' drapt onter de tree. But de tree wuz holler an' he jes' drapt right down eenside 'twel he struck de groun'. He wuz plumb stunded at fus', but atter w'ile he set up an' look' roun'. 'Twuz mighty dark in dar an' he s'arch an' he s'arch fer some place ter git out, but 'twan't none dar. He lissen an' he lissen an' he feel an' he feel, but dar he wuz, shet up tight wid nuttin' but a speck er daylight, 'way up in de tree.

"Las' he yearn a man choppin' in de woods an' he say ter hisse'f dat he mus' 'trac' de 'tention er dat man ef he wanter git out. 'Hi-yi! Mistah Man,' sezee, speakin' fine lak a ooman, 'come yer, Mistah Man.'

"Mistah Man ain' year him an' go on wid de choppin'.

" 'Man mus' be deaf ez a pos',' sez Hyar' ter hisse'f. 'I reckon I gotter yell loud 'nuff ter bus' my b'iler ef I wanter git outer dis.' He try hit ag'in, but yit de man ain' year. Den he thought mebbe de man mought year him ef he sung sump'n, so he struck up a ol' chune an' dese wuz de wu'ds whar he putt wid hit:

AT THE BIG HOUSE

*'Oh! ef I had a needle,
Ez fine ez I cu'd sew,
I'd stitch my true love to my side
An' down de river I'd go.'*

He made his voice jes' lak one'r dese yer high, fine, ladiz' voices whar carry de soun' a long ways, an' las' Mistah Man year him an' he say, 'Mussy me! w'at dat? 'Pears ter me I year a ooman gwine on inside dat tree.'

"He walk up an' lean his haid 'gins' de tree ter lissen. Den Hyar' he 'gun ter holler an' cry jes' lak a ooman. He say: "Oh, please, Mistah Man, fer ter teck yo' ax an' chop a hole in dis tree an' lemme out. You done tol' de trufe; I is a ooman, an' a pooty one inter de bargum; an' ef you let me out I gwine set down 'long side er you an' let you look at me all you wanten'."

"'All right,' sez de man, sezee, grinnin' ter hisse'f; 'kase all mens is mo' er less uv fools w'en hit come ter de marter uv a good-lookin' gal, an' he chop an' he chop, jes' mo'n mekin' de chips fly in his has'e ter git a sight er de gal. Hyar' he wuz scrouched down in a cornder outer de way er de ax, an' soon ez de hole wuz big 'nuff he tuck an' tuck a good raidy an' went scootin' out, right 'twix' de man's laigs, inter de bresh. 'Hi-yi! Mistah Man,' he yell, 'ain' I de fine shape uv a gal? You kin have me ef you kin ketch me!' an' wid dat he wuz off, singin':

*'Oh! ef I had a needle,
Ez fine ez I cu'd sew,
I'd stitch my true love to my side
An' down de river I'd go.'*

MR. HARE, MR. MINK AND MIS' DUCK

"Hyar' he done got so hongry in de tree dat he 'bleeged ter gnor sump'n, an' dar wan't nuttin' else, so he jes' natchelly turnt to an' et his own tail off; an' dat huccome hyar's bin gwine roun' wid shawt tails ontwel dis day."

"But," objected Ned, "I thought that old Hare was dead. You told us that they killed him by shooting him in the paw, and that they punished the chick-a-dee for bad advice by cutting the end of his tongue off, because he didn't tell them at first to shoot the Hare in the paw."

Aunt 'Phrony was not too well pleased at being called to account for resurrecting her hero, but she condescended to explain: "W'y, kain't you see dat dis yer happen long befo' de time w'en he got shooted in de paw? Dat's plain ez de nose on yo' face. 'Kase I tell you dat tale fus', hit's no sign dat hit happen fus'. I'se gittin' so ol' an' rambly dat you hatter let me go back on my tracks now an' den, ef you wants me ter go on wid de tale-tellin'."

MIS' GOOSE DECEIVES MR. BEAR

The children, not content with the society of Aunt Nancy in the morning, when she made their toilets, or in the evening, when she put them to bed, used to make her a visit now and then at her cabin. One morning they found her busy carrying in pumpkins from the little field behind her house. Ned thought it would be fun to kick them along like footballs, but Nancy said that pumpkins were made for eating, not for kicking, and that unless the children went about it in the right way she did not care about their help. Janey, with a shrewd eye to business, said they would all three turn to and help, if she would promise to tell them a story when the pumpkins were all stored. The bargain was clinched, and four pairs of hands made short work of the pumpkins. Then they all sat down in the doorway of the little cabin, and Aunt Nancy said that the pumpkins had reminded her of a tale in which Mr. Bear got fooled by Mis' Goose.

"You chillen done yearn tell," she began, "dat gooses is kind er foolish, silly sort er fowels, an' I want er tell you right yer an' now dat dey got heap mo' sense dan some er de folks whar calls names at 'em, an' ez fer de ganders, I'se yit ter see de human man teck de kyare uv his wife an' fambly dat dat ol' gander, yonner, do uv his'n. He he'p de goose ter buil' her nes', an' dey teck

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some er de down f'um der breastes an' line de nes', jes ez wo'm an' 'white an' pooty ez kin be, an' den she set on hit, an' he keeps gyard at de hen-house do' an' ef any pusson come near he beat his wings at 'em an' do his bes' ter drive 'em 'way. An' w'en she go off ter eat an' res' husse'f he jes' natchelly squat down on de aigs an' keep 'em wo'm ontwel she git back. Mebbe y'all has yearn de gooses cry out in de night. Well, dat's w'en dey change gyard, fer dey sets a watch all thu de night an' w'en-uver dey changes, de watchman gins out a cur'ous cry ter say dey's changin' gyard an' ev'ything gwine on all right. Yas, suh, gooses ain' de gooses folks bin callin' 'em all dese 'ears. An' I let you know dat big an' lumbbersome ez Mistah B'ar wuz, dar wuz a time w'en Mis' Goose got plumb de bes' uv 'im,

"She wuz gwine waddlin' 'long one day wid her chillen all strung out in a long line behime her. De goslin's wuz right young an' she wuz teekin' 'em down ter de branch fer ter l'arn 'em ter swim. She wuz mighty proud uv 'em, an' she wuz gwine long wid her haid r'ared up, shooiin' 'em ev'y now an' den ter keep 'em in de straight paf, an' cacklin' so's't ev'yb'dy cu'd year 'er: 'You Fluff! You Puff! You Buff! You year me? I want y'all ter keep in de paf. Yon's a dog; you better stick clost ter me ef you know w'at good fer you!' So Fluff an' Puff an' Buff an' all de res' er de chillen dey turnt der toes in an' went waddlin' 'long in a straight line down ter de branch.

"'Bout dat time dey met up wid ol' man B'ar. He wuz stayin' out in de woods all by his lonesome, an' w'en he see Mis' Goose gwine 'long wid all dat nice fambly ter keep her comp'ny, he git strucken wid de



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notion dat he want a fambly, too, ter teck roun' wid 'im an' chur him up an' drive 'way de low-downs. So he s'lute Mis' Goose mighty p'litely, tetchin' his paw ter his hat an' sayin', 'Mawnin', Mis' Goose; mawnin', ma'am; I hope I sees you well.'

"She gin a li'l hiss an' spread her wings an' done lak she gwine run at 'im, 'kase she wan't 'feard er no pusson, an' she mighty tetchy w'en she lookin' atter her chillen. But pres'n'y she see dat de ol' man want'er be fren'ly wid her, so she putt her wings down an' bob her haid, an' she say, she do, 'How you come on yo'se'f, Mistah B'ar?"

"He 'low, he do, dat he wuz kind er ailified, an' dat he feel de need uv a fambly ter keep him f'um gittin' lonesome. 'W'en I seed you comin' down de paf wid dat nice, big fambly er yo'n, Mis' Goose,' sezee, 'I ses ter myse'f, sez I, "Dat's de kyore I bin needin' fer dese yer low sperrits er mine, dough I ain' bin knowin' w'at 'twuz. I gwine ax her, dis ve'y minnit, please ma'am, ter tell me how I kin git me a fambly lak her'n.'" Mis' Goose she turnt her haid roun' on de side an' cut one eye up at 'im, de way gooses does—'kase dey nuver seem ter look at you ouden bofe eyes at onct—an' she see he mean w'at he say; so she mek arnser, she do, 'Well, suh, I done hatch out dese chillen f'um de aigs.'

"'Is dasso?' sezee. 'Wellum, I be might'ly 'bleeged ef you tell me whar I kin git me some aigs.'

"Right dar Mis' Goose wuz tucken wid a notion dat mek her laugh an' laugh on de eenside, so's she sca'cely cu'd stan' on one foot lak she bin doin'; she hatter putt bofe on de groun' so's't she kin stan' stiddy. But she ain' dyare laugh out loud, an' she nuver even smile



“Yer De Aigs, Mistah B’ar”

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w'ile she tell him: 'Lawdy! lawdy! Mistah B'ar, I swan ter man! I knows de ve'y contrapshun whar gwine suit. Over yon' in de fiel' is a hull nes'ful er aigs jes' waitin' fer some un ter set on 'em. I wish I'd bin able ter have unnertooked dat job myse'f, but you see my han's right full a'raidy wid dese yer twelve li'l chillen er mine, an' I'se feelin' right po'ly, too, f'um settin' so long on de aigs. Done los' my flaish, suh, done los' my flaish, an' my appentite ain' w'at 'twuz. I'se 'bleeged ter be hones' wid you, suh, an' let you know dat dish yer settin's hard wu'k, suh, dat hit is.'

"B'ar he say, 'Bless yo' soul, Mis' Goose, I ain' look ter git me nuttin' in dish yer suff'rin', dyin' worl' widout I wu'k fer hit, an' ef a delikin lady lak you kin stan' hit, I reckon I kin, big an' strong ez w'at I is.'

"Mis' Goose she say, 'Well, come on den, ef you sesso,' an' she tuck an' led de way ter a fiel' whar dar wuz a pile er pun'kins in a fence cornder, an' she say, she do: 'Yer de aigs, Mistah B'ar. Now, suh, lemme see you set on 'em. You gotter kiver 'em ev'y one wid yo' body an' keep 'em nice an' wo'm, else dey ain' gwine hatch out, an' you have all yo' trouble fer nuttin'.'

"Ol' man B'ar he squat down on de pun'kins an' he quile hisse'f fus' dis-a-way an' den dat-a-way, an' dror his laigs up an' den putt 'em down, an' den git up an' tu'n clean roun' an' squat ag'in. Jes' w'en he think he'z all fix', yer come a pun'kin rollin' out fus' one side an' den tu'rr. Mis' Goose she dyin' ter laugh, but she ain' dast ter, an' las' she whu'l in an' he'p git him fix'. Den she go off down de paf wid her fambly, laughin' so't she kain't speak, w'en she met up wid Mis' Molly Cotton-tail. Mis' Molly wait a li'l, an' den she say: 'You is a

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sho'-nuff goose, sho' nuff! W'yn't you speak up lak you had some sense an' lemme know de joke?"

"Las' Mis' Goose tell 'er, an' she yell an' she holler an' hol' onter her sides. She ain' stop ter say good-by, but jes' went' stavin' long de paf 'twel she come ter de fence cornder an' seed ol' B'ar. She let on she ain' know w'at he'z up to, an' she say, 'Heyo, Mistah B'ar, w'at you doin' dar, suh, layin' in de fence cornder dis time er day?"

"He say: 'Jes' res'in' myse'f, Mis' Molly; jes' res'in' myse'f. Done come a fur ways an' I'se tryin' ter ketch my wind ag'in.'

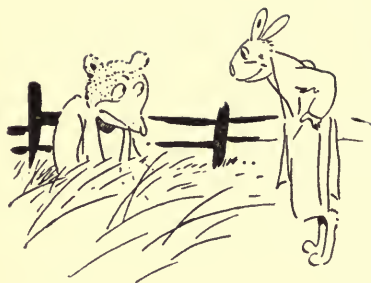
"She say, sez she, 'Dis a mighty fine day; I wish you come fer a walk wid me.'

"He say he too tired, an' den she say she wait 'twel he git res'ed. He baig her not ter teck so much trouble, an' she say 'twan't no trouble 't all, an' dey run on lak dat, pow'ful p'lite, but all de time B'ar he wuz pestered ter know how he gwine git shed uv her, an' he wuz 'feard ev'y minnit dat a pun'kin wuz gwine roll out f'um beneaf him.

"All de time Molly Cotton-tail sca'ce kin keep her face straight, but las' she got tired er de fun an' putt out fer home, tellin' him she be back to-morrer ter see ef he wuz res'ed up.

"Sho' 'nuff, back she came, an' she say, sez she, 'Heyo, Mistah B'ar, I stopped 'long ter tell you I done foun' a tree up de road a mile er so, an' hit's dat chock full er honey dat 'twon't hol' nu'rr drap, an' ef you sesso, I'll go right 'long wid you an' show you de way.'

"B'ar he lick his chops an' do lak he gwine git up. Den he 'member de pun'kins an' drap back, an' he say,



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he do: 'Thanky ma'am, Mis' Molly, thanky ma'am. I'se feelin' too painyfi'd ter go wid you dis mawnin', call roun' ag'in, ma'am, an' I go wid you, sho', 'kase you knows I is 'tickler fond uv honey.'

"Molly she hang roun', an' B'ar he try ter git her ter g'long, but she tell him she ain' press' fer time, an' dat her ol' man an' de chillens gwine keep 'twel she git home. Ev'y day she come back an' ax him is he well 'nuff ter go atter de honey, an' ev'y day he say, he do, 'You mus' 'scuse me dis mawnin', Mis' Molly, you sho' mus'; de sperrit's willin' but de flaish mighty weak, ma'am, mighty weak.'

"Las' she say, sez she, 'I b'lieve you, suh; you sut'n'y has growed weak an' thin an' pindlin'; you is nuttin' mo' dan de shadder er Mistah B'ar.'

"B'ar he gin a groan, 'kase he knowed 'twuz de trufe. He ain' bin off de nes' ter git him vittles, 'kase he 'feard de aigs mought git col', an' he wuz nigh 'bout starved. He ain' dast ter move, neener, fer fear de aigs roll f'um un'need. Hit 'pear ter him he kain't stan' hit ter keep still nu'rr minnit. Mis' Molly Cotton-tail knowed dat right well, but she kep' on naggin' an' naggin' at him 'twel he say 'Drat de ooman, I wish I ain' nuver think 'bout gittin' me a fambly.'

"Las', one day, he kain't stan' hit no longer an' he riz up an' turnt hisse'f roun', but he wuz so weak dat he jes' fell back onter de pun'kins, an' some uv 'em roll out f'um un'need an' de res' wuz all squshed up, 'kase dey'd 'menced ter git sof' by dat time. B'ar he groan an' he moan an' he cry an' he roll on de groun' an' dig bofe fistes in his eyes. 'Bout den Mis' Molly come 'long an' year de gwines-on, an' she stop an' hang over de fence

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'tendin' lak she mighty saw'y. She say, sez she, 'Lawsy, Mistah B'ar, w'at does I see, suh; an' w'at is de 'casion uv all dis mis'ry?'

"O lawd! O lawd! sezee, 'my po' fambly; my po' fambly!' an' wid dat he bus' out ter cryin' ag'in. W'en he git so's't he kin talk, he say: 'Mis' Molly Cotton-tail, I ax you, ma'am, fer ter look at dem aigs whar I bin settin' on all dis time, an' whar I 'lowed I gwine hatch out inter a nice li'l fambly. You sees fer yo'se'f how mos' uv 'em all sqush' up, an' de res' done roll 'way f'um me an' git stone col'. An' yer me all hongry an' thu'sty an' wo' ter de bone, all fer nuttin'.'

"At dat he cry mo' louder dan befo'. Den Mis' Molly ain' try ter keep in no longer. She lean up ag'in de fence an' she yell an' she holler. 'Hey, lawd!' sez she, 'he call dem aigs! dem big ol' rotten pun'kins is *aigs*! Well, live an' l'arn, sez I! Yer me bin 'lowin' all dese 'ears dat dem things wuz pun'kins, an' now I fine dey is aigs. Ef I'd a-knowed w'at you wuz up ter all dis time, suh, I'd a-bringed you some er dat honey whar I bin tellin' you 'bout, 'kase you mus' be mighty hongry by dis time. Dish yer settin' bizness is mighty tryin', I year tell, so tryin' dat de mens mos' in gin'ly leaves hit ter de ladiz. Lemme know nex' time you gwine hatch out a fambly, an' I try ter he'p you out in de marter er vittles. You'se a plumb skil-lintin; you sho' is!'

"Ol' B'ar gittin' kind er rile up by dat time, an' do lak he gwine teck atter her. She lit out f'um dat, but she see he wuz too weak ter foller her, so she run back fer a minnit an' stuck her haid thu de fence, an' sez she, kind er rollin' one eye on de pun'kins an' one on

MIS' GOOSE DECEIVES MR. BEAR

him: 'Um-umph! Mistah B'ar, dis sut'n'y is a pity,
'kase ef dem aigs had on'y hatch out, yo' fambly
moughter bin *some pun'kins*, sho' 'nuff.' "

MR. BEAR TENDS STORE FOR MR. FOX

"Aunt Nancy," said Ned, after the story of the bear and the pumpkins, "I wish you'd tell me what relation Molly Cotton-tail was to Mr. Hare."

"Relation?" she asked; "you mean w'at a-kin wuz she? No kin' 't all, 'scusin' by ma'iage; 'kase she wuz his wife, chil'; an' atter she live wid him so long time, she got ez trickish ez w'at he wuz, an' dat's sayin' a heap. She wuz a mighty smart ooman, an' she knowed how ter read an' write, an', w'at's mo', she cu'd mum-mick de writin' er mos' any pusson she wanter, an' dat come nigh gittin' her inter a hull passel er trouble onct, but she wuz so slick she wiggle out jes' in time. Hit wuz lak dis: Fox he done tried his han' at huntin' an' fishin' an' farmin' widout mekin' much uv a fist at any un 'em, an' las' he set him up a li'l sto' at de cross-roads; one'r dese yer sto's whar de folks brings a li'l haid-turn er truck an' trades hit fer bacon an' meal.

"One day Mis' Molly Cotton-tail, she done runned outer sump'n ter eat, an' de chillen wuz hongry an' baiggin' fer vittles. She say to husse'f: 'Dese chillen gwine run me 'stracted. I hatter stay home yer an' lissen at all der bodderment w'iles der paw goes cavawt-in' roun' de kyountry enj'yin' hisse'f might'ly. 'Tain' fair. But nemmine, I gotter feed dese chillen, an' I knows w'at I gwine do.'

MR. BEAR TENDS STORE FOR MR. FOX

“Wid dat she sot down an’ tucken a piece er paper an’ a ink-bottle an’ a quill, an’ she stuck de quill behime one year an’ sot dar studyin’ an’ runnin’ her fingers thu her hya’r ’twel she got de marter all fix up in her min’. Den she tucken de quill an’ writ a order ter Mistah Fox fer a bag er meal an’ a shoullder er meat, an’ she tuck an’ signed Mis’ Fox’s name to hit, jes’ ’zackly de way she done seed Mis’ Fox write her name one time. Den she sot down in de do’ an’ wait fer some pusson ter pass by. Fus’ news you know, yer come Mistah B’ar amblin’ down de road. By dat time he fergit how Mis’ Molly done laugh at him ’bout de pun’kins, an’ w’en she mek her manners to him, nice an’ proper, he arnser mighty p’litley. She ain’ knowin’ how he gwine treat ’er, but w’en she see ’twuz all right she ’mence muchin’ him, ’kase she wuz a gre’t han’ ter flatter folks, an’ w’en she git things wu’k up ter de proper p’int, she say: ‘’Scuse me, Mistah B’ar, I is ’sentially a backwu’d ooman an’ I hates ter ax favers, but my chillen is hongry an’ no vittles in de house an’ der paw f’um home. I be might’ly ’bleeged, suh, ef you leave dis order fer me at de cross-roads sto’ an’ bring me de vittles on yo’ way back.’

“B’ar he say ’twon’t be no trouble, an’ he tucken de order an’ lef’ hit at de sto’ an’ den got de bacon an’ meal on de way back an’ fetched hit ter Mis’ Molly. ’Twan’t long ’fo’ ’twuz all et up, an’ ’twan’t long, neener, ’fo’ Mistah Fox fin’ out de vittles wuz lef’ wid Mis’ Molly stidder wid his own ol’ ooman, an’ he ’clar’ he gwine git even wid ’er fer forgin’ his ol’ ooman’s name.

“Mis’ Hyar’ she ain’ knowin’ he foun’ her out, so one day she go inter de sto’ ter trade, biggitty ez you please,

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an' he up an' ax 'er fer ter keep sto' a minnit wiles he step out. She kind er smell a mouse, an' she tell him she ain' got time fer ter tarry. Den he tucken her by de scruff er de neck an' tie her up good an' tight, an' he say, sezee: 'Uh-huh! Forge my ol' ooman's name, will you? Eat up my meal and bacon, hey? Trash er de worl'! I gwine go out an' git me a cowhide an' gin you de bes' larrupin' you uver has had er uver is gwine ter git.'

"He went out an' lef' 'er dar studyin' 'bout de fix she wuz in, an' mos' pussons 'ud 'a felt skeerder an' skeerder ev'y minnit, but, bless yo' soul, Mis' Hyar wan't faze' by hit. She start in ter hummin' one'r dese gaily ol' darnsin' chunes an' pattin' wid her footses, 'kase her han's wuz tied behime her. Las' she bus' out at de top uv her voice inter de wu'ds er de song:

*'Sam, Sam wuz a funny ol' man,
Fried his meat in a fryin' pan,
Combed his haid wid a wagon-wheel,
Died wid de toofache in his heel.'*

"'Bout dis time some un come sa'nterin' down de road an' year de noise an' poke his haid in de do.' Who shu'd dat be but Mistah B'ar, an' he say, sezee, 'Hey, Mis' Molly Cotton-tail, w'at de meanin' er all dis racket, an' w'at you doin' all snarl' up in dat rope?"

"'Well,' she 'low, 'I come yer ter git some colamel fer my sick chil', an' Mistah Sly-fox he up an' tell me he gwine gin a party at his house to-night, an' he ax me fer ter stay an' jine in de fun, an' I 'low I kain't, 'kase I hatter git back ter my chil', an' he 'low dat dey

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kain't git 'long widout my comp'ny nohows, an' dat he b'lieve I'se too stuck up ter 'sociate wid his fambly an' jes' mek up dat tale 'bout de sickness er my chil'. I kep' on tellin' him I kain't stay, an' las' I say I go home an' teck de colamel wid me an' see how de chil' is, an' come back. But he 'low, he did, dat a bu'd in de han' wuz wuf two in de bush, so he tucken de rope an' tie me up dis-a-way 'twel night. Den he step out ter mek some reddyments fer de party, an' he ax me fer ter mind de sto' w'iles he's gone. Yer I is, settin' yer tryin' ter keep my min' off my po' sick chil' by singin' an' knockin' time. You ain' nuver bin a mammy, Mistah B'ar, er you'd know jes' how I'm feelin' dis ve'y minnit,' an' right dar she let two big tears fall down on de flo', ker-splash!

"B'ar felt mighty saw'y w'en he see dat; mens is right easy tucken in by a few li'l ol' tears, an' he say dat he ontie her, ef she say de wu'd, an' let her go. She say, 'Yas, suh, but Mistah Fox he done 'spec' me ter see dat nuttin' git stole outer de sto'; w'at I gwine do 'bout dat?'

"B'ar he 'low dat he ain' min' tendin' sto' a li'l, an' she tell him, 'Go ahaid, den, an' ontie me.' Den she say he better let her tie him up in de same place so's't he kain't change his min' 'bout stayin' fer de party. B'ar say he wan't hankerin' atter any gay doin's, but ef dar wuz any vittles ter be 'stroyed at de party, he wuz de man fer de place. So he let Mis' Molly tie him up an' den she went clippin' down de road, stoppin' at de turn long 'nuff ter sing out: 'O Mistah B'ar! O Mistah B'ar, I hope you enj'y yo'se'f at de party! Dey tell me hit gwine be mighty small an' s'lect. 'Tain' s'prise



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me ef you hatter do mos' er de darnsin' yo'se'f.' Wid dat she went a-kitin', an' den she slip inter de bresh an' double an' come back an' squat down by de sto' ter lissen.

"Pres'n'y yer come Mistah Fox lopin' back wid a gre't cowhide in his han', an' he wuz mo'n s'prise' w'en he see ol' B'ar all squoge up an' tied fas' in de place whar he done lef' Mis' Molly Cotton-tail. 'Laws-a-mussy!' sezee, 'w'at in de name er de ring-tail-roarers is de meanin' er dish yer piece er bizness? Who done tie you up dis-a-way? Dat Molly Hyar', I be boun'!"

"'De same,' sez de B'ar, sezee.

"'Huccome dat?' sez de Fox, sezee.

"'Well, suh,' Mistah B'ar say, 'she tell me you done tie her up ter mek her stay fer yo' party to-night, an' she say she natchelly pinin' ter git home ter her sick young un, an' she cry a li'l an' baig a li'l, an' las' I tell her I jes' 'z lief teck her place an' tend de sto' an' go ter de party.'

"'Fox he curl his mufstarsh an' twis' de een' up an' look at ol' B'ar ouden de cornder uv his eye an' he say: 'Uh-huh, is dasso? You tol' her dat, did you? You willin' ter stay ter de party? Well, ef dat de case, kin you tell me w'y she hatter go ter wu'k an' do you up in all dem hard knots?'

"'B'ar he say: 'Dat's all right. I turn her a-loose, an' den she tie me up dis-a-way 'kase she laugh an' say I mought change my min' 'bout stayin' fer de party, so she bes' mek sho' uv me, fer you so hard up fer fren's 'mong's de creeturs dat you hatter do dis-a-way ter git anyb'dy ter come.'

"'Dat mek Fox madder'n a hatter, dough he ain' so



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mad but w'at he kin laugh an' holler an' slap his han' on his knee. 'Lawd! lawd!' sezee, 'ef dat ain' one smart ooman! Well, suh, de on'ies party I wuz gwineter gin wuz a hidin'-party, an' me an' her an' dish yer cow-hide wuz de on'ies folks eenvited, an' now, suh, sence you done let de chief mo'ner go, w'y dish yer gwine be yo' chanct ter do de cryin'.'

"Wid dat he whu'l de ol' rawhide roun' thu de air 'twel she snap lak a snappin'-turkle, an' bring her down on Mistah B'ar's back, zip! zip! zim! B'ar he r'ared an' he charged an' he tore an' he swore an' he growled an' he howled, but 'twan't no use, Mis' Molly she done tied him up good an' fas'. Fox he done whup him an' whup him 'twel de hide hung offen him in plumb ribands. Fox kep' on 'twel he got him right much skunt up, an' all de time he wuz jawin' him wid ev'y lick. 'I gwine l'arn you some sense, you gre't big lan'-lubber! Gwine l'arn you not ter be tucken in by ev'y li'l ol' ooman whar kin pump de water outen her eyes in th'ee shakes uv a sheep's tail! Gwine l'arn you not ter meddle in urr folkses mixes. You is de ve'y man whar comed yer an' bringed me dat order f'um my ol' ooman whar nuver come f'um her 't all, an' 'twuz you toted off de meal an' bacon ter ol' Molly Cotton-tail. Ain' you know dat ooman well 'nuff by dis time ter know dat you gwine git in trouble ef you don' keep 'way f'um her? You ol' 'nuff ter know better, 'deed you is; anyhow I gwine l'arn you.'

"Ol' B'ar he git ter cryin', an' ev'y time de whip come down he let out a big 'Boo-hoo!' Mis' Molly she wuz settin' outside lis'nin', an' ev'y time he say 'Boo-hoo!' she laugh 'Ho-ho!' at de same minnit, so dey ain' year

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her 't all. W'en Fox turnt Mistah B'ar a-loose, she wuz off ouden dat in a jiffy, an' B'ar ain' see her fer one long spell. He hatter stay home an' nuss his hide for a w'ile, an' he vow ter goodness dat he gwine frail Molly good nex' time he meet up wid her. 'Mis'able li'l fippenny-bit,' sezee, 'her ter git a gre't big man lak me a th'ashin' f'um dat ol' Slickry Sly-fox! I knock 'em bofe inter de middle er nex' week nex' time I ketch 'em, dog me ef I don'.'

"Las', one day, Molly seed him comin' down de road, an' she turnt off inter de bresh an' scooted thu a shawt cut 'twel she got way beyont him. Den she hop inter de middle er de road an' sing out, 'Heyo, Mistah B'ar, how you enj'y yo'se'f at Mistah Fox's party? I done yearn dat you sing mo' louder an' jump mo' higher dan any urr man at de doin's. No pusson 'ud think dat jes' ter look at you gwine 'long so sollum an' stiddy. You kain't tell, dough, mens is mighty 'ceivin'; 'tain' safe fer us po' wimmins ter place ow' 'pennance on yo' looks.' Wid dat she gin her behime laigs a flirt in de air an' went splungin' inter de bresh ag'in, lak Ol' Harry hisse'f wuz atter her, w'ich mebbe he wuz, an' puttin her up ter all her mischief."

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"Yas," said Aunt Nancy, "one time Mistah B'ar an' Mistah Tarr'pin wuz bofe co'tin' de same gal. Dey kep' hit up a long time, waitin' on her an' flyin' roun' her, but neener uv 'em seem ter git de inside track. Hit sut'n'y wuz a sight ter see 'em gwine on befo' her, cuttin' up shines an' talkin' fas' an' tryin' w'ich kin 'trac' de mos' 'tention f'um her. B'ar wuz a sulky sort er feller, an' hit look plumb reedikelous ter see him tryin' ter run on an' laugh an' mek hisse'f 'greeable. Tarr'pin he mighty slow 'bout his talkin', well ez his walkin', an' hit wuz 'nuff ter mek a tiger titter ter see him settin' up tryin' ter slip a wu'd in aidgeways now an' den. Dey'd git dar on de same night, an' try ter see w'ich kin set tu'rr one out, an' neener one uv 'em 'ud leave; so 'long 'bout ten de gal's mammy 'ud stir roun' in de nex' room an' drap her shoes down hard on de flo', an' de gal 'ud be tucken wid a fit er de gaps, an' den dey knowed hit wuz time ter git up an' mosey.

"De gal's folks useter run her right smart 'bout her beaux an' de way dey run atter her an' come roun' nights an' stuck one nu'rr out, an' her mammy 'ud jes' shake all over wid laughin' an' say, 'Gracious ter goodness, gal! how long you gwine let dem fellers come sasshayin' roun' you? Whyn't you mek up yo min' one way er tu'rr? I kind er tired seein' 'em toge'rr; dey

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looks so cur'ous 'long side er one nu'rr. You sut'n'y got de long an' shawt uv hit wid yo' beaux.'

"Gal git kind er tired uv hit, too, but she ain' seem ter be able ter mek up her min'. Las' she say to 'em, one night w'en 'twuz mos' time fer 'em ter leave an' dey bofe wuz pesterin' her ter 'cide betwix' 'em, 'Gemmen, you is bofe so 'greeable dat 'deed I kain't mek up my min' w'ich ter teck an' w'ich ter leave; 'deed I kain't. So dis w'at I gwine do. Y'all kin start f'um de cross-roads nex' Friday mawnin' at de same time, an' w'ichuver one gits yer by twelve o'clock, dat de one I ma'y. But I have you bofe ter know dat you mus'n' git yer neener befo' ner atter; you mus' be right on de stroke er twelve er you kain't be de winner.'

"Dey bofe 'greed ter dis an' went on home.

"W'en Tarr'pin wake Friday mawnin' he gin hisse'f a stretch an' open his eyes an' see 'twuz jes' gittin' daylight, an' he say ter hisse'f, 'Shucks! better not be layin' yer no longer; bes' git up an' dus' ef I 'spec' ter git dar ahaid er Mistah B'ar. He ain' no swif' trabeller, dat's a fac', but he's a mighty soon man 'long side er me, so I bes' slick up a li'l an' g'long.'

"So he stop long 'nuff ter gin his shell a good rubbin' down 'twel hit shined lak glass, an' den he sot out fer de gal's house.

"Jes' atter sun-up ol' B'ar wake up an' roll over an' stretch an' rub his eyes, an' sezee, fetchin' a big yawn, 'Dog-my-cats! ef I don' b'lieve dish yer's de day fer de race 'twix' me an' ol' Tarry-long Tarr'pin. Umph! wish't I had time fer nu'rr li'l snooze. Ol' Tarr'pin so slow I b'lieve I gwine turn over an' try a li'l nap on tu'rr side.' Jes' den he ketched sight uv a track in de road



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dat go pas' his house an' he got up ter look at hit. Fus' hit seem lak some un bin draggin' a plank 'long thu de dus', but w'en he 'zamine hit he see de li'l foot-tracks on bofe sides an' den he knowed 'twuz whar Tarr'pin bin draggin' his un'need shell thu de dus'. 'Sho!' sezee, 'I better spunk up an' git outer dis; no tellin' how early Tarr'pin started; he mought git dar fus' ef I ain' look out.'

"So he gin his fur a good rakin' over an' putt on all his bes' fixin's an' set out fer de gal's house.

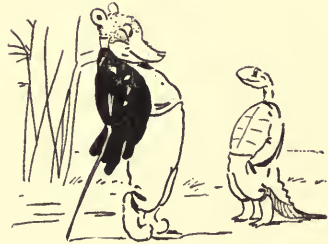
"'Fo' he got ve'y fur he met up wid Tarr'pin an' sezee, 'Heyo, my fren', w'at mek you start so early? 'Tain' do you no good ter git dar befo' de time. Gal say you mus' 'rive on de stroke er twelve, neener befo' ner atter.'

"'Yas, suh; yas, suh, I knows dat,' sez Tarr'pin, sezee, 'but you mus' 'member w'at a slow trabeller I is. A big man lak you, w'at teck gre't long steps, boun' ter beat me ef I ain' stir my stumps an' start early.'

"'So dat's how de lan' lays, is hit?' sez B'ar, sezee. 'Well, ol' man, keep on ef you wanter, but I'se 'feerd you have all dis trabblement fer nuttin'. You mought ez well set down in de shade an' 'j'y yo'se'f, 'kase I boun' ter git dar fus'; you ain' got de ghos' uv a chanet, an' de gal knowed dat w'en she talk 'bout de race. 'Twuz jes' her way uv gettin' shed er you widout hurtin' yo' feelin's.'

"'Mebbe so, mebbe so,' sez Tarr'pin, sezee, 'but ef you don' min', suh, I jes' 'bout think I gwine keep on, now I got dis fur.'

"'Dey tol' one nu'rr 'so-long,' an' B'ar he go on an' soon leave Mistah Tarr'pin a fur ways behime. He see de sun ain' ve'y high yit, an' he wuz right wo'm an' tired,



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so he say he b'lieve he lay down in de shade an' res' a w'ile. So dat w'at he do, an' pres'n'y he go fas' asleep, an' he slep' an' he slep' an' he snore an' he snore, an' de flies come an' lit on his nose an' tickled him, but he jes' breshed 'em off wid his behime foot an' went on sleepin'.

"Atter w'ile 'long come Mistah Tarr'pin draggin' hisse'f thu de dus' an' de hot sun. He see Mistah B'ar layin' off unner a tree, an' he strotch his neck up outer de shell, an' drord off de paf an' looked at him good. 'Uh-huh!' sezee, 'fas' asleep, I see. Well, snooge on, Mistah B'ar; dat suits me 'zackly, an' I have you ter know, suh, dat hit's a ol' sayin' an' a true sayin', "De long pole reaches de 'simmon, but de smart dog gits hit."'

"Wid dat Tarry-long he went amblin' on an' lef' Mistah B'ar sleepin' lak a log an' snorin' lak a saw-mill.

"Pres'n'y B'ar waked up an' seed Mistah Tarr'pin's track ag'in an' knowed he'd bin by. 'Gee whizz!' sezee, 'dat mis'able li'l cuss done had de insurance ter pass me? I mus' git up an' git, er no tellin' w'at happen.' Wid dat he shuk hisse'f an' got up an' went 'long right fas' 'twel he ketched sight er Tarr'pin ag'in. Den he slacked up a li'l an' putt on lots er style, swaggerin' roun' over de road an' singin' one'r dem ol' toas'es ter de ladiz:

*'Success to de red-bu'd,
An' lakwise ter de wren;
God bless all de pooty ladiz,
An' not so many men.'*

"He let on lak he ain' see Tarr'pin 'twel he git right

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up 'long side uv 'im, an' he mek out dat he wuz jes' 'bout ter tromp on him by mistake. He dror back his foot an' say, 'Oh, 'seuse me, is dat you? I did n' know you wuz dar. Well, how you come on, anyhow? Slow wu'k, ain' hit, suh? You mought ez well give up an' go back, I tell you dat, 'kase dar's no queschin who gwine git de gal; she knowed dat f'um de fus'. I dunno w'y she set me an' you at dish yer fool racin', but dar's no use tryin' ter study out de ways uv a gal; I done gin dat up long ago. You gotter let her have her sesso.'

"Tarr'pin he say, sezee, 'Well, Mistah B'ar, you pussue atter yo' way an' I'll pussue atter mine, an' mebbe you 'll see me at de een' er de line yit. I done come dis fur 'long; seem lak hit be too bad ter gin up now. I'm a right slow man, to be sho', but I tell you, suh, I'm a sticker.'

"B'ar g'long an' git way ahaid er Mistah Tarr'pin ag'in. He wall his eye up at de sun pres'n'y an' he see dat 'twan't twelve yit an' dat de gal's house wan't so fur away, so he mek up his min' ter teck nu'rr li'l res'. 'Shucks!' sezee ter hisse'f, 'dat li'l ol' slow-coach won't be 'long yer fer one w'ile, an' I mus' be kyarful not ter git ter de place befo' twelve, so yer whar I gwine res' me ag'in.' Wid dat he plumped hisse'f down un'need a tree. He fell fas' asleep befo' long an' he slep' an' he slep' 'twel mos' twelve o'clock.

"Atter w'ile yer come li'l Tarr'pin, wo' mos' ter a frazzle, but jes' paddlin' on down de paf' widout even stoppin' ter teck bref. He see ol' B'ar layin' dar in de shade an' he stotch his neck out ag'in fer a good look, an' sezee unner his bref, 'So ho, my furry fren'! fas' asleep ag'in, I sees. Dar's whar you mek de gre't mistek er yo'

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life. 'Tain' safe, suh, ter 'spise any man, nemmine how po' an' no-kyount he seem ter be; mebbe he gin you a s'prise yit one'r dese days. I sez onct an' I sez ag'in, "De long pole reaches de 'simmon, but de smart dog git hit." ' Wid dat he crope up nearer an' nearer ter Mistah B'ar an' looked him good in de face an' seed he wuz fas' asleep yit. Den he wu'kked on down ter one'r B'ar's behime footses, an' squat down dar an' tuck de een' uv a tuf' er long fur in his mouf an' sot dar waitin'.

"Pres'n'y B'ar he waked up an' walled his eye up at de sun an' seed 'twuz mos' twelve o'clock. 'Gre't gum!' sezee, 'has dat Tarr'pin pass me by ag'in?' He look ahaid fer Tarr'pin's track. None dar, so he feel safe. 'I mus' be humpin' myse'f ef I wanter git dar on de stroke er twelve,' sezee.

"Wid dat he got up an' shuk de dus' outer his fur, but he ain' notuss Tarr'pin, 'kase de fur so thick he kain't see him. Tarr'pin wuz hangin' on fer dear life; he wan't gwine be shuk off, not him. Sezee ter hisse'f, 'Aw naw, suh, you hatter shake hard 'nuff ter onloose de fur f'um yo' hide befo' you kin shake me off; my mouf built fer hol'in' on. Mebbe I kain't wu'k my jaws ez fas' ez some folks, but w'en hit come ter clinchin' 'em, I'm right dar.'

"B'ar go crunchin' an' scrunchin' down de road, mekin' gre't has'e ter git ter de gal's on de stroke er twelve, an' all de time yer wuz Tarr'pin jes' gwine swingin' on down de road wid him, mouf clinched tight in de fur, an' ol' B'ar ain' have de sign uv a notion dat he wuz totin' Tarr'pin to'des de gal's house.

"De gal an' her mammy wuz settin' on de po'ch lookin' out fer de gemmen. Jes' befo' de stroke er

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twelve de gal riz up an' shaded her eye wid her han' an' looked down de road. She see Mistah B'ar mekin' gre't has'e, an' she sing out, 'Oh, maw, yer come Mistah B'ar! Hit look lak he gwine win, 'kase I ain' see no sign er Mistah Tarr'pin.'

"B'ar he seed her an' he 'gun ter bow an' scrape an' teck off his hat, an' de gal she 'mence ter snicker an' giggle an' mek her manners. W'en he got ter de po'ch he wuz clean outer bref, so't all he cu'd say fer a minnit wuz 'Howdy, ma'am, howdy, gal!' Gal she say, 'Howdy, Mistah B'ar; I sut'n'y glad ter see you dis mawnin'; how you come on? Whar you done lef' Mistah Tarr'pin? Tee-hee! Seem lak he ain' gwine set de evenin' out wid you dis time. Tee-hee!' She titter ag'in an' sort er hide behime her han' lak she feel monst'ous backwu'ds now dat Mistah B'ar 'bout ter win de race.

"B'ar he say, 'Sho! I lef' dat li'l contrapshun down de road so fur aways dat he kain't ketch up in a mont' er Sundays. Him ter race wid me! I tol' him, ma'am, dat dar wuz nuver any queschin who gwine beat, an' dat I knowed you wuz knowin' dat w'en you putt us ter racin'.' B'ar he swelled roun' some mo', an' gal she snort an' snicker some mo', an' las', jes ez de clock 'bout ter strike twelve she git a cheer an' ax him ter set down.

"'Don' kyare ef I do, ma'am,' sezee, an' he squared roun' wid his back ter de cheer ter set down. Tarr'pin he tuck dat 'casion ter drap down inter de cheer, blip! an' dar he sot lookin' ez peart ez a lizzu'd an' he sings out, 'Hol' up, dar, Mistah B'ar; don' you set down on me, suh, 'kase I kin bite hard, ef I ain' ve'y big.'

"B'ar he wuz mo'n half squat down an' he riz up in a hurry an' turnt 'roun' wid his eyes fair' bulgin' outen

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his haid, an' sezee, 'Name er common sense! how did you git yer?"

"Tarr'pin say, sezee, 'Nemmine how I got yer; yer I is an' yer I stay. I done tol' you w'en I met up wid you in de road dat de longes' pole reaches de 'simmon, but de smartes' dog gits hit, an' now I done prove de trufe er dat sayin'."

"Gal she say, 'Mammy, I wants you jes fer ter look at dat Mistah Tarr'pin settin up dar in de cheer ez cool an' comf'ble ez kin be, not a speck er dus' on his footses, an' not even outen bref. He ain' faze' by dat long walk, an' yer Mistah B'ar, big an' strong ez he is, all tuckered out. 'Clar' ef hit don' beat bob-tail! Shows dat you kain't go nuttin' on looks."

"Dat you kain't! sez de Tarr'pin, sezee, 'ner hit don' do ter be sho' uv anything in dish yer mawtul worl'. Mistah B'ar mought 'a beat me easy 'nuff, even to'des de las', ef 'twan't fer dat second nap he done tuck; dar's whar he lose his needle."

"De gal an' her mammy dey say, 'Now ain' dat de trufe! You sut'n'y got good horse-sense, Mistah Tarr'pin, an' we glad you done won de race. I 'spec' you lak mighty well ter wash de dus' outer yo' th'oot wid a glass er cider atter dat long walk. Jes' set still an' git out yo' pipe an' mek yo'se'f right at home."

"Dey stood dar muchin' him an' waitin' on him, 'an' dey ain' even ax Mistah B'ar ter have a cheer, so he lef' Tarr'pin settin' dar sippin' de cider an' went off down de road suckin' his thumb all de way an' thinkin' w'at a consumbunkshus fool he done mek uv hisse'f."



“Name Er Common Sense ! How Did You Git Yer?”

MOLLY COTTON-TAIL STEALS MR. FOX'S BUTTER

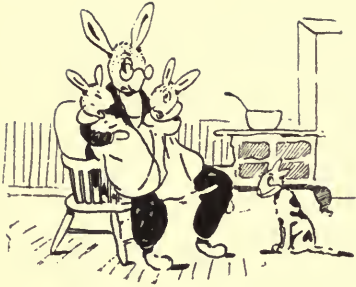
"Aunt Nancy," said Janey, "do you know any more stories about Mis' Molly Cotton-tail? I think she's 'most as smart as Mr. Hare, and I like to hear about her 'most as much."

"'Mos' ez smart! 'mos' ez smart! well ef dat don' beat all!" said Nancy, throwing up her hands in affectation of indignant surprise. "Lemme tell you dat w'en a ooman start out ter be trickish she kin beat a man ev'y time, 'kase her min' done wu'k heap faster an' she see all roun' an' over an' un'need an' on bofe sides uv a thing w'ile he's tryin' ter styare plumb thu hit."

"Didn't you say she was his wife?" asked Ned. "I should think they would have called her Mrs. Hare always, instead of Molly Cotton-tail. Why do you s'pose they didn't?"

"Law! honey," she answered, "don' come axin' me no sech li'l fool queschins ez dat. How you reckon I gwine know all de w'ys an' de wharfo's uv all de ol'-time doin's? I kain't spressify de reasonment uv her bein' call Molly Cotton-tail sometimes, but hit come 'cross me jes' now dat mebbe de ma'ied wimmins ain' tucken der husban's name in dem days lak dey does now. Anyhows, I know she called Mis' Molly Cotton-tail, an' not jes' wholly an' solely de wife er Mistah Hyar'. She ain' de

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sort er ooman ter sottle down an' be jes' plain Mis' Hyar' all her days, an' stay home an' lissen at de chillen cry an' wash der faces an' comb der hya'r an' cook der vittles, 'ear in an' 'ear out. Huh-uh! Mis' Molly she got too much git up in her fer dat. She mek ol' man Hyar' stay home an' min' de chillen now an' den, an' he ain' dast ter say no, neener. Lemme see, now, whar wuz I at? Ef I'se gwine tell you any mo' tales, you mus'n' come at me dat-a-way wid queschins, lessen you wanster putt de tales outen my haid. I jes' had my mouf fix' ter tell you one w'en y'all bruk in on me 'bout de name. Lessee, w'at *wuz* dat tale 'bout, anyhow's?"

"Well, I asked you for another one about Mis' Molly Cotton-tail," said Janey; "so may be it was about her."

"Sho' 'nuff, sho' 'nuff," said Aunt Nancy. "'Pariently I'se gittin' fibble in de min' ez well ez in de j'int's, ter go fergittin' dat-a-way. Yas, de tale wuz 'bout one time w'en Mis' Molly an' Mistah Fox go ter mek a visit wid Mistah Fox's brer whar live 'cross de swamp an' down in de holler. He wuz right fren'ly wid her 'bout dat time an' 'vite her ter go wid him. She wuz all dress' up in her good clo'es an' her good manners, gwine 'long mekin' husse'f mighty 'greeable, talkin' 'bout dis an' dat, cuttin' her eye up at him real sweet an' stickin' ez clost ez a bur to a cow's tail."

"Why, I didn't suppose they would ever be good friends again after the tricks she played him," said Janey.

"Um! chil'," she answered, "dis happen so long atter dat ol' Fox plumb fergit dey uver had any fallin's-out. You better not pester me no mo' er I mought fergit de tale, clean ez a whustle. Well, dey went on, him he'pin'

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her over de foot-logs, mighty mannerly, an' runnin' on an' crackin' jokes wid her, an' las' dey got ter de house. Mistah Sly-fox's brer w'ich dey call him 'Hongry Billy,' 'kase he wuz all time eatin' up folkses chickens, he 'vite 'em in an' tell 'em fer ter mek derse'fs at home an' ax 'em ter stay ez long ez dey kin. Mis' Molly she teck off her hat an' shawl an' de ridicule f'um her arm an' lay 'em on de baid. Den she say, 'Mistah Hongry Billy, I'se dat indush'ous I kain't bear ter be idle even w'en I'se off on a visit; so please, suh, ter lemme git de supper, stidder settin' yer hol'in' my han's.'

"Billy tell her he ain' kyare, so she whu'led in an' set de table an' drord de pine-tag tea an' made de ash-cakes, an' Hongry Billy he showed her whar ter git de butter, down at de spring. W'iles dey 'z at supper 'long come a naber an' tol' 'em dat ol' Mistah Gray-fox wuz dyin' an' done sont fer Billy ter set up wid him. So Billy 'scuse hisse'f an' ax 'em fer ter teck kyare er de house ontwel he come back an' mek derse'fs right at home. Den he g'long off wid de naber.

"Dat night, w'en Mistah Fox git ter noddin' an' snoogin' by de fire, Mis' Molly she slip out ter de spring an' et up de butter down ter de ve'y las' smidgin, an' den set to an' licked de crock 'twel 'twuz clean ez ef hit bin scoured. Den she lick her mouf an' whiskers clean, an' come in an' sot down by de fire ag'in befo' Fox had time ter wake up an' miss her. She sot dar lookin' ez innercent ez a lamb, gwine on wid her knittin' an' hummin' a chune, jes' ez ef she ain' nuver had butter in her min' ner in her mouf.

"Nex' mawnin' Hongry Billy come back, cross an' sleepy f'um de settin'-up, an w'en he go down ter de

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spring ter git de butter fer bre'kfus', dar sot de crock, empty ez a go'de. I let you know he wuz mad. He come a-huffin' an' a-puffin' up ter de house, an' he say, sezee, 'Dish yer a nice howdy-do! Y'all calls yo-se'f 'spectable folks an' comes yer an' squats down on me, an'



den w'en I turn my back you eats up ev'y rap an' scrap er butter you kin fin' on de place. I bin thinkin' y'all wuz folks an' now I fin' you is hogs!' An' wid dat he turnt his back on 'em bofe an' went flouncin' out de do'.

"Dey foller 'im up, 'clarin' dey dunno nuttin' 't all

MIS' HARE STEALS MR. FOX'S BUTTER

'bout de butter, an' Mis' Molly she do talkin' 'nuff fer bofe, she do. She say, sez she, ' 'Twan't me, suh, 'deed 'twan't! I cross my heart! W'at I want wid yo' butter, anyways? I got me plenty butter at home; I ain' hatter go ter de nabers for ev'y li'l ol' snack er vittles I want. Sidesen dat, I got a mighty delikin stummick, an' I kain't eat no butter lessen I done mek hit myse'f, 'kase I ain' sho' de folks bin right clean an' kyarful in de mekin.'

"Dat mek Hongry Billy madder'n befo', an' he say, sezee, 'Well, mebbe my butter wan't clean; I dunno 'bout dat, but I does know 'bout *dis*: hit *clean gone*, an' w'at's mo', one'r you two is de pusson whar gonod hit. I gwine keep you bofe right yer 'twel I fine out w'icht is de thief.'

"Molly she study li'l, an' den she say, sez she, 'Mistah Billy, I'se ve'y saw'y dis happen, 'deed I is. But w'ats done kain't be ondone, an' so de on'ies' thing now is ter prove w'icht er we-all tucken yo' butter. Ef I ain' 'ceive myse'f, I knows de sho' an' sut'n way ter fin' out w'icht is de thief. Jes' you g'long 'bout yo' wu'k an' let me an' Mistah Sly-fox lay down yonner in de sun all day, an' w'en you comes back dis evenin' I boun' you kin tell w'icht uv us done et de butter.'

"'Huccome?' sez Hongry Billy, sezee.

"'Dat easy ez rollin' off a log,' she say. 'De heat er de sun gwine strak thu an' dror de grease out, so't w'en you come back all you hatter do be ter rub yo' fingers over ow' stummicks an' den you'll know in a jiff who done swollered yo' butter.'

"Mistah Slickry Sly-fox 'gree ter dis, 'kase he know he ain't tucken de butter, so he wan't 'feard hit be proved up on him. Hongry Billy he say hit look mighty reas'n-

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able an' he 'gree ter hit, too, an' went off 'cross de swamp ter tend ter his wu'k, an' lef' 'em bofe dar layin' in de sun.

"Atter w'ile she say, sez she, blinkin' an' battin' her eyes lak she kain't keep 'em open, 'Um-umph! Mistah Fox, dat sun mek me pow'ful sleepy, please 'scuse me, suh, but I'se jes' nachelly 'bleeged ter teck a li'l nap.' Fox say he b'lieve he teck one hisse'f, an' he shet his eyes an' putt his nose down between bofe jaws an' gin his tail a whisp er two ter drive 'way de flies, an' pres'n'y he wuz fas' asleep.



"Mis' Molly she watch him outer de cornder uv her eye, an' w'en she see he wuz good an' soun' she lit up f'um dat widout mekin' no noise an' struck out fer a naber's spring an' got her a han'ful er butter. She come tiptoein' back an' stoop down an' rub de butter all over Mistah Fox's stummick, so sof'ly dat he ain' kin feel hit, an' den she go an' lick her paws clean an' laid down in her place ag'in an' kep' one eye on him. 'Bout de time w'en she 'spec' Hongry Billy home she shet her eyes an' snore so loud he year 'er clean 'cross de holler. W'en he come up to 'em dey wuz 'pariently fas' asleep, an' Billy he retcht down an' run his han' over Mis' Molly's stummick. Dry ez a bone! Den he try Mistah Slickry Sly-fox, an' he bringed up his han' kivered wid grease an' smellin' loud er butter.

"Billy wuz in a turr'bl' teekin' an' mek sech a fuss dat he wake Mistah Fox an' fall ter excusin' him er teekin' de butter. Ol' Fox wuz dat s'prise' ter fin' his stummick kivered wid butter dat he ain' kin say nuttin' 't all. 'Bout den Mis' Molly Cotton-tail 'gun ter stretch an'

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rub her eyes an' 'tend lak she jes' wake up. She lissen at all de gwines-on a minnit an' den she 'mence ter mek gre't 'miration. 'Laws-a-mussy!' she say, 'I ain' b'lieve dis ef I ain' see hit wid my own eyes. I sut'n'y is scanelize' dat a fren' er mine tucken ter stealin', mo' special on a visit. I 'clar' ter goodness my feelin's is so hurted dat I kain't rightly 'spress myse'f, an' w'at's mo', I kain't stay yer 'sociatin' wid a common thief. I got my young fambly ter think 'bout. So long, Mistah Hongry Billy. I hopes you gin dat man a good walluppin', 'kase he sut'n'y 'arn hit, comin' yer puttin' up on you an' den cleanin' out yo' butter. Nex' time you git me ter go visitin' wid you, Mistah Slickry Sly-fox, you be heap older an' smarter dan w'at you is dis minnit.' Wid dat she go scootin', 'kase she 'feard ef she stay longer she mought git foun' out somehow er nu'rr.

"Hongry Billy he study li'l w'ile an' den he say ter Mistah Fox, 'Well, I gwine let you off dis time, 'kase you is my kin an' I ain' wantter disgrace you; I ain' wantter let folks know I got a thief fer a brer. But 'don' let me ketch you in dese diggin's no mo', er I gwine set ter wu'k an' lam de butter outer dat greasy hide er yo'n; you year me talkin'!'

"Fox he 'clar' an' he sw'ar dat he wan't de thief, but Billy ain' pay no 'tention to him. Den he had half a min' ter tell ol' Hongry Billy 'bout all dem hen-roos'es he done robbed, but Billy so mad a'raidy dat he kind er 'feared ter do hit, so he go slinkin' off wid his years down an' his tail draggin', an' dey tells me dar wuz a gre't coolness spring up in dat fambly dat las' fer some sev'l 'ears, all 'longer dat crock er butter. I let

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you know, chillen, hit ain' teck much ter start a fambly quoi'l, but hit teck heap er time an' trouble ter patch one up, jes' de same ez hit do wid dem holes whar li'l Mars' Ned snag in his britches, an' nuyer seem de same atter de patchin', neener."

THE FOX AND THE DUCK.

One night when Aunt Nancy was putting the children to bed, and they were, as usual, begging for a story to go to sleep upon, she asked, "Is I uver tol' you anything 'bout ol' Mis' Duck?"

The children said that she had never told them a duck story, but that Aunt 'Phrony had.

"Lawsy! I dunno huccome I ter fergit ter tell you 'bout her," she said; "mebbe 'kase she sech a li'l runt uv a fowl. But nemmine dat, she got plenty sense, an' one time she fool Mistah Fox, sho' 'nuff. Look lak some pusson er ru'rr all time foolin' him, an I kain't 'zackly see thu dat, 'kase dese days he's mighty smart an' up ter snuff an' kin dodge de houn's an' de hunters de pooties' uver you see. Looks lak in dem days things wuz sort er lak dreams, jes' de contrary-ways f'um w'at dey is now. Anyways, she knowed how ter bamboozle him somehow er ru'rr.

"One time she wuz gwine waddlin' down ter de branch, talkin' 'way ter husse'f, hard 'z she kin, runnin' on quackin' an' scoldin' 'bout dis an' dat. Mistah Fox he wuz nosin' roun' thu de woods an' he year her, an' he say ter hisse'f, he do, 'Yer's whar I gwine git me a good meal er vittles; I reckon she jes' 'bout big 'nuff ter fill me chock-full, an' she look right young, so I 'spec' she's

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plump an' tender.' He smack his lips an' go rackin' roun' ter de front an' squat down behime a tree, an' w'en she git mos' up ter him he jump out an' nab her



by de neck an' fling 'er 'cross his shoulder an' g'long singin'.

"All de time he wuz singin' Mis' Duck she wuz hangin' haid down, jes' a-kickin' an' a-scufflin', but 'twan't no use; Fox he hilt on, he did, an' he jes' let her go on jawin' all she want. Las' she stop her racket an' set

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her min' ter wu'k on de queschin uv how ter git outer de pickle whar she wuz in. Pres'n'y she say, "Scuse me, please, suh, Mistah Slickry Sly-fox, I lak ter talk to you a li'l bit, but hit's mighty hard wu'k wid my haid hangin' down so turr'bl' slanchindicular. I ax you, please fer ter fix me wid my haid a li'l higher, suh."

"'Naw, *ma'am*,' sez de Fox, sezee, 'I knows 'nuff ter hol' onter a good thing w'en I gits hit.'

"'Laws-a-mussy, Mistah Fox,' sez Duck, sez she, 'you is mighty flattersome in yo' remarks; I ain' gwine try ter chouse you outer yo' dinner, 'deed I ain'. But w'ile we joggin' long yer, I jes' lak ter ax you, suh, ef you lak pig ter eat?"

"'Now you talkin',' sezee, an' he smack his lips so loud dat hit sont col' shivers up an' down Mis' Duck's spine, an' he say, 'W'at de marter, Mis' Duck; w'at you shiver 'bout dis wo'm day?"

"She wuz too proud ter let on dat she wuz 'feard, so she say, 'Oh, nuttin' 't all, Mistah Fox, jes' a li'l tetch er de ager; you know w'en you got dat you 'bleeged ter shiver, nemmine how wo'm de day is.' Den she go on ag'in 'bout pig. She say, 'So you sho' 'nuff does lak pig, suh. I done year tell you did, but I wan't sho' 'bout hit.'

"Fox he got his min' on pig an' seem lak he kain't git hit off, an' las' he git kind er mad 'kase dar wan't no pig ter be had, an' he say, sezee, 'Look-a-yer, ooman, I dunno huccome you name dat meat ter me w'en you knows I kain't git me none.'

"Mis' Duck she ses, sez she, 'Now, I ax you fer ter tell me de plain trufe, suh; w'icht does you perfer, pig er duck?"

"Sezee, 'Gimme pig ev'y time, 'kase 'tain' got no



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fedders. I tell you, ma'am, w'en you swollers duck down de way I does, fedders an' all, yo' th'oot gits mighty woolly sometimes. I e'en about 'spec' I'll choke ter def yit on duck some er dese times.'

"'Sarve you right, an' I hopes you will,' sez Mis' Duck ter husse'f. Den she sing out, 'So you perfers pig, suh. Putt me down, den, land knows! an' I'll show you whar you kin git you a hull litter er pigs!'

"Fox sezee, 'Wellum, yer goes fer de pigs, an' min' you walk straight, fer ef I fin' any foolin' 'bout dis bizness I ain' gwine gin you time ter say yo' pra'rs. You jes' mosey 'long in front er me, please ma'am.'

"She tuck an' tuck him to a place whar a gus'-root wuz blowed up clean outen de groun', an' she p'inted hit out to 'im an' tol' 'im dat behime dar wuz de litter er pigs, an' dat he mus' run f'um a piece off an' jump de gus'-root right inter de baid er pigs an' s'prise 'em dat-a-way, so's't he cu'd git 'em easy.

"Ol' Fox he 'gree ter dis, an' he run back a li'l ways an' tuck a big bref an' spit on his han's an' th'owed one foot front an' tu'rr one behime, an' teetered back an' fo'th a minnit ter git a good swing on him. Den he bus' inter a run an' lipt de gus'-root widout techin' foot to hit an' lan'ed in de midse er de litter. But bless goodness, 'twan't no litter er pigs, 'twuz ol' Mis' Dog an' her li'l chillen.

"'Ow! wow!' sez she, 'who dis owdacious creetur dat come a-r'arin' an' a-chargin' inter my house, 'sturbin me an' my fambly? Ef 'tain' dat good-fer-nuttin' piece uv imp'ence, ol' man Fox. I gwine show you huccome, dat I is! I let you know you kain't come 'stroyin' de peace uv 'spectable folks no sech a ways ez dat. Stay yer one



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minnit longer an' I gwine putt my foot down yo' th'oot!

"Wid dat Fox he lipt outer de baid faster dan he got in an' jes' went a-scootin', Mis' Dog atter him, hot-foot. Mis' Duck she wuz behime de gus'-root jes' a-snickerin' an' a-snortin'. Fox he ketched sight uv her an' he sung out, 'Nemmine, Mis' Duck, you is de 'casion uv all dis rumpus. I reckon you think dish yer's a mighty funny prank you played me, but I gwine pay you back fer dis; jes' you wait, ma'am. You gwine teck nu'rr free ride on my shoulder 'fo' you knows hit, an' dat time you won't git off so easy. You kin pin hit down in yo' 'memb'ance dat I gwine pay you back wid int'res' on de money.'

"Mis' Duck she knowed he dassent ter stop right den, so she let out one big hoot an' she ses, sez she, 'So do, Mistah Fox, so do. Now's yo' time, suh; de sooner de better. Whyn't you stop, suh? You ain' nuver gwine ketch me no younger. Better not wait, suh; de longer you waits de older an' tougher I grows.'

"But ol' man Fox knowed too much ter stop w'en Mis' Dog wuz at his heels, so he went a-sailin' an' lef' Mis' Duck stannin' by de puppies jes' a-quackin' an' a-cacklin' an' a-laughin'. An' uver sence dat time dar ain' bin much love los' 'twix de foxes an' de ducks. I reckon de foxes has done paid 'em out mo'n a hunderd times fer dat trick."

WHY THE GROUND-HOG HAS A SHORT TAIL

One evening the children went down to Aunt 'Phrony's cabin and found her and her grandson, William, hovering over a handful of embers, for the nights were growing a little chilly. The old woman was singing, and she rocked back and forth in time to the music, as she led with the words of the hymn, while William joined in the refrain of the old-time favorite,

DOWN BY THE RIVER

*Whar's all dem chillen dress' in white,
Down by de river?
Mus' be de chillen er de Is'elite,
Down by de river side.*

*Refrain: Oh! we'll end dis war,
Down by the river;
We'll end dis war,
Down by de river side.*

*Whar's all dem chillen dress' in red,
Down by de river?
Mus' be de chillen whar Moses led,
Down by de river side.—Refrain.*

WHY THE GROUND-HOG HAS A SHORT TAIL

*Whar's all dem chillen dress' in green,
Down by de river?
Mus' be de chillen whar Joshua seen,
Down by de river side.—Refrain.*

*Whar's all dem chillen dress' in pink,
Down by de river?
Mus' be de chillen whar teckin' a drink,
Down by de river side.—Refrain.*

*Whar's all dem chillen dress' in yaller,
Down by de river?
Oh, dar whar de water it run mighty shaller,
Down by de river side.—Refrain.*

*Whar's all dem chillen dress' in gray,
Down by de river?
Mus' be de chillen whar squandered away,
Down by de river side.—Refrain.*

*Whar's all dem chillen dress' in black,
Down by de river?
Mus' be de chillen whar done turn back,
Down by de river side.—Refrain.*

*Whar's all dem chillen dress' in blue,
Down by de river?
Mus' be de chillen whar done come thu,
Down by de river side.—Refrain.*

The children waited until the Israelites were safely brought through before announcing themselves, when

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they were cordially welcomed to the fireside, for Aunt 'Phrony was in an unusually genial mood, possibly induced by her favorite hymn and the triumphant passage of the children of Israel.

"Come right in yer an' set yo' li'l se'fs down by de fire," she said. "Snip, git yo' lazy kyarkiss offen dat cheer an' let Miss Janey have hit. Min' w'at I say to you, cat, er I come dar an' cuff you. Snap, teck yo'se'f offen dat h'ath an' gin dese chillen room ter putt der footses down. I nuver seed a dog dat cu'd spread hisse'f over so much ha'th-room ez w'at he kin. Well, chillen, I bin studyin' 'bout y'all dis ve'y day. Wi'yum he bin huntin' an' bringed home a groun'-hog wid him an' dat putt me in min' uv a tale I wanter tell y'all 'bout, how de groun'-hog come ter have such a shawt tail.

"One time he wuz gwine 'long studyin' 'bout odds an' een's an' not payin no 'tention ter whar he wuz er w'at he wuz doin', an' fus' news he knowed he run spang up ag'in a gang er wolfs an' dey nabbed him in a jiff an' wuz gwinter mek a meal offen him, den an' dar. Groun'-hog he wuz right boddered. 'How in de name er common sense did I run my haid inter sech a trap ez dis?' sezee; 'look lak I bin rootin' roun' thu de worl' 'long 'nuff ter keep outen sech messes ez dis. Well, I reckon nob'dy kin live long 'nuff not ter gin hisse'f a s'prise now an' den. De thing fer me is not ter let on befo' dese gemmen dat I'se skeered, an' mebbe I'll pull thu yit somehow er ru'rr.'

"But w'en dey 'menced rampin' an' roarin' all roun' 'im an' gnashin' der toofs at 'im hit mek 'im feel kind er faintyfyed, an' he say ter hisse'f, he do, 'Lawd, lawd! I wish I bin sassified ter stay home un'need de groun'

WHY THE GROUND-HOG HAS A SHORT TAIL

dis day!' He ain' let on, dough, an' pres'n'y he mek out ter say, 'Gemmen—fer I kin see you is sho'-nuff gemmen by de lookin's uv you—gemmen, I knows y'all done bin roun' a heap an' seed a lot, but I boun' you dar's one thing you ain' seed in all yo' bawn days.'

"De wolfs jes' howled an' laughed wid scawn ter think dar wuz anything lef' dat dey ain' seed. 'W'ats dat?' dey ses; 'name dat to us, ef *you* please. Sump'n dat we-all ain' seed, much ez we bin romantin' up an' down de worl'! We lak ter know mighty well w'at dat kin be.'

"Well, now I tell you,' sez de Groun'-hog, sezee, 'I be willin' ter bet dese yer two years offen my haid dat wid all yo' goin' up an' down an' back an' fo'th an' to an' fro, none er you has uver seed a groun'-hog darnse; is you now?'

"De wolfs dey hunched up der shoulders at one nu'rr an' dey ses, 'Shucks! dish yer plumb reedikelous, de idee uv a groun'-hog darnsin'; who uver yearn er de likes er dat?'

"'Nemmine,' sez de Groun'-hog, 'ef y'all doan b'lieve me I kin show you; 'twon't teck but a minnit; I'll bofe sing an' darnse fer you, an' I ain' gwine tas'e any de worse fer dat, I reckon. I boun' you, I kin gin y'all some 'musement an' yit eat jes' ez good den ez now. 'Twon't teck long, nohows.'

"De wolfs dey insulted toge'rr an' 'greed ter let him try. 'Twon't mount ter shucks, nohow,' dey ses; 'mought ez well let him have one li'l whu'l befo' we swaller him.'

"Groun'-hog he ses, 'Gemmen, I gwine play you fa'r, an' ter mek sho' dat I don' git 'way f'um you, you kin mek a succle er yo'se'fs an' s'roun' me on all sides.'



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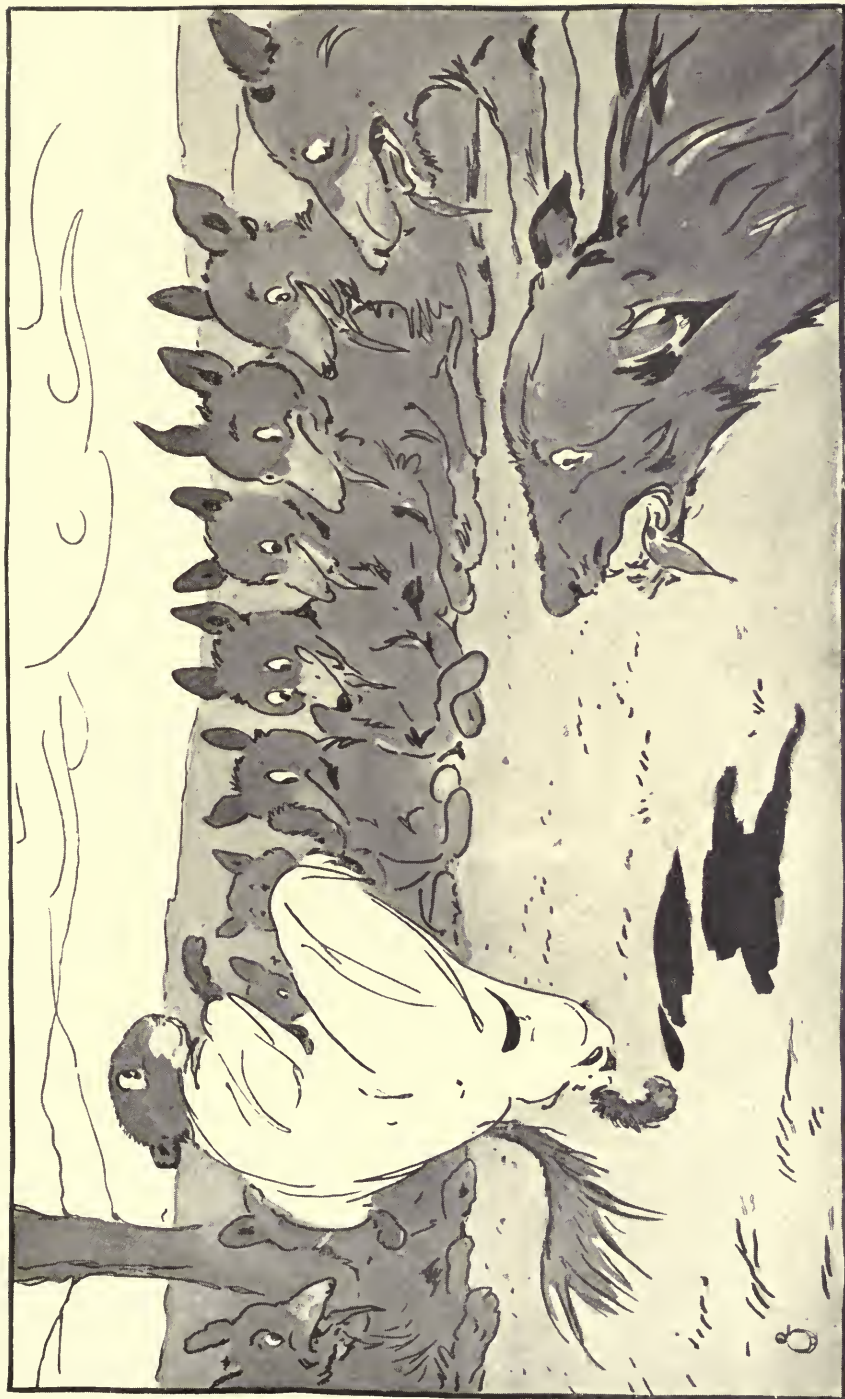
"So de wolfs dey do dat; dey mek a succle all roun' him an' gin him a big range, an' squatted dar on der ha'nches wid der big red tongues lollin' outer der moufs an' der long toofs a-showin', glarin' at him wid der ol' green eyes. Groun'-hog he 'mence ter sing lak dis:

*'Di-a-di-a-hey, di-a-di-a-hey,
Di-a-di-a, di-a-di-a, di-a-di-a-hey.'*

"At de same time he darnse, an' uv all de capers you uver seed, dem tuck de lead, fer ol' man Groun'-hog wuz darnsin' fer his life, *he* wuz. He kep' flippin' his paws in time ter de music, an' he wagged dem behime footses so fas' dat hit look lak he jes' hangin' in de air widout no laigs twix' him an' de groun'. All ter onct he'd spin clean roun' on one foot an' den go on ag'in, faster dan befo'. De wolfs dey wuz might'ly 'mused, an' dey jes' clapped der han's an' hollered an' mos' fergit dey wuz gwine eat him, but I boun' you Groun'-hog *he* ain' fergit hit.

"Las' he gin one gre't han'-spring backwu'ds an' dis-appeart lak he wuz wipe offen de face er de yearf, an' lef' de wolfs settin' dar on der ha'nches. Dey look behime an' dey look befo' an' dey look on de groun' an' den up in de air, ez ef dey thought mebbe he done jump so high he ain' come down yit; but dey ain' see Mistah Groun'-hog.

"'Now, whar you s'pose dat triflin' creetur gone to?' dey ses ter one nu'rr. Las' one uv em' whar wuz settin' up hol'in' a piece uv a tail in his han' he say, he do, 'Umph! I don' *s'pose*, I *knows*. Dat sut'n'y is a slick li'l creetur. We-all ain' notuss dat de place he pick out



Groun'-Hog Wuz Darnsin' Fer His Life

WHY THE GROUND-HOG HAS A SHORT TAIL

fer ter darnse in wuz mighty nigh ter de hole whar he live. He kep' a-aidgin' an' a-aidgin' nearer an' nearer, an' las' he gin one spring, an' down he went. I wuz de neares' uv any an' I seed him goin'. I grabbed him by de tail, but suz! he wuz gwine so fas' dat nuttin' cu'd stop him, an' de tail jes' natchelly bruk off an' lef' dish yer piece in my han'.

"Well, ef dat don' beat bowser!' sez de 'wolfs, an' den dey laugh ter think how dat li'l creetur done fool 'em, ontwel one un 'em clap his han' on his stummick an' 'low he feel mighty empty, an' den dey all laughed on de wrong side er der moufs, 'kase dey knowed dey gotter do widout dinner dat day.

"Now dat's de reason de groun'-hogs got sech shawt tails, an' Wi'yum kin go an' git dat one whar he ketched an' show you de trufe er w'at I bin tellin' you. You year me, Wi'yum! Don' you set dar lookin' at me, suh! You mosey 'long out ter de shed an' git dat groun'-hog dis ve'y minnit, lessen you wants me ter come dar an' walk up an' down yo' body a time er two! Wi'yum do lak he wuz hung on henges an' de henges wuz all rusted out, but I boun' you ef I wuz ter say 'supper' ter Wi'yum, he'd move right lively."



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When the ground-hog had been duly examined and commented on the children hinted that they were ready for another story. Aunt 'Phrony at first refused, saying that it was time they were home tucked up in bed, ready for the nightly visit of the Sand Man. When they insisted that they were never wider awake in their lives, she said, "Well, mebbe you isn' sleepy, but mebbe I is. High time I knocked de ashes outen dis pipe an' hanged my ol' bones up on de baid." But finally she gave in to the combined persuasions of the three and consented to tell the story of the hare, the wild-cat and the otter.

"One time," she began, "ol' Hyar' he wuz squanderin' roun' thu de woods wid a pipe stuck in his mouf, idlin' 'way de time, w'en all ter onct Mistah Wil'cat jump out f'um behime a big tree an' yell, 'Boo!' at him an' fetch a grab dat all but ketch him. Hyar' wuz sho'-nuff s'prised dat time, but he gin a big jump ter one side an' lan'ed behime a tree an' stood dar ez still ez a mouse, sca'cely drorin' his bref in an' out, not dastin' even ter peek so's'ter see ef Wil'cat wuz still dar. He got mighty tired an' cramp' up befo' long, an' sezee ter hisse'f, 'Mussy me! w'at oon I gin jes' ter wall my eye roun' dis tree an' see w'at dat mis'able creetur doin'. I ain' year nair' soun'; mebbe he gone on. Ef he's tired ez w'at I is, I 'spec' he done gin de marter up an' moseyed 'long ter git his vittles som'ers else.'

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Wid dat he stick his nose out ter see w'at gwine on, an' dat wuz 'nuff fer ol' Wil'cat; he jes' gin one monst'ous jump an' lan'ed right onter de Hyar', an' den dar wan't no sech thing ez gittin' 'way, I tell you. No use ter kick an' squall; dem claws jes' curled derse'fs right



inter him an' stuck dar, much ez ter say, 'Yer we is, suh, now lessee you onloose yo'se'f.'

"Wil'cat hol' him up in front uv him an' talk 'way at him lak Hyar' wuz de pris'ner at de bar an' he wuz de jedger an' de jury an' de hull co'te th'owed in, an'

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ev'ry now an' den he gin him a shake dat mek ev'ry toof in his haid rattle lak de seed in a dry go'de. 'Uh-huh!' he say, sezee, 'I bin wantin' ter git my claws inter you dis long time! Meddle in urr folkses bizness, will you? Go roun' an' hunt up mischief an' play tricks on yo' betters, will you? You got a lot er gumption, I reckon; dey tells me you has, anyways; but dat ain' gwine do a man much good w'en his time comes; no pusson so smart dat he kin keep ouden de schlutches uv ol' man Def, an' dat's right whar you is dis ve'y minnit, I tells you dat p'in'-blank, an' you'll know I bin tellin' you de trufe w'en I 'mence ter mek minch-meat uv you, w'ich is gwine be did dis ve'y minnit, ef not sooner.'

"Hyar' he feel kind er pa'lyze w'en he year dat sort er talk, but pres'n'y he pick hisse'f toge'rr, an' sezee, wid a mighty pleasin' smile, 'Mistah Wil'cat, dish yer yo' innin's, an' I reckon you gwine do w'at you please wid me; I ain' gwine 'spute dat, but I ax you dis, suh, is I a fitten dinner fer sech as you? Ain' I lean ez a razor-back hog? Is I mo'n one good moufful, an' sca'cely dat? You kain't 'ny dat, suh. Now I ax you ter 'member de time w'en I done fill you up chock-full er tukkey, wid-out you havin' no mo' ter do dan lay still an' let on you'se 'sleep w'iles I toll de tukkies up to you wid singin' an' darnsin'. I kin do dat ag'in, an' better'n dat. Jes' name yo' game, an' I'se de man whar kin git hit fer you. Don' be too modes', suh; big game er li'l game, hit's all de same ter me.'

"Wil'cat he study for a minnit an' den he say, 'Well, I'd lak mighty well ter git me a tas'e er deer meat onct mo'. So long sence I set my toofts inter a piece dat I 'clar' I mos' fergit how hit do tas'e. I bin livin' on shawt

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commons dis long time, an' I'se dat hongry I'se nigh 'stracted. Ef you kin git me some deer I gwine let you off dis time; but min' you, Mistah Hyar', no tricks 'bout dis er I frail you so hard you'll wish I'd et you up 'stidder clawin' you inter grape-vine strings. You know me, suh, an' you knows I don' stan' no triffin'.

"Dat's all right, suh, dat's all right," sez Hyar', sezee, 'jes' you come 'long er me an' I show you dat I'se a man er my wu'd. We gotter go down ter de place whar de deers come ter drink an' ter eat de moss, an' dar I gwine show you w'at I kin do, ef I is no mo'n a li'l shawt-tail runt; fer dat's w'at I year some er de folks bin callin' me. Step 'long dis way, suh, ef you please.'

"Dey went on down ter de branch whar de deers come ter drink, an' Hyar' he say, 'Now, Mistah Wil'cat, jes' you set dar in de bushes an' hide, an' I'll crope out on dat limb whar hang over de water, an' w'en de deer comes I'll jes' drap spang onder his back, an' w'en he 'mences ter r'ar an' splunge an' mek fer de bank, den's de time you mus' jump out an' nab him.' All de time he say ter hisse'f, 'Yas, lawd! an' w'en I onct git onder dat deer's back 'tain' gwine teck me long ter jump ter tu'rr bank an' git outer yo' way, suh!'

"Wil'cat he say, 'All right, suh, go ahaid. But min' you, fa'r play, now. None er yo' tricks an' traps wid me, er I gwine come a-rattlin' an' a-shattlin' down dar an' jes' natchelly scrape you inter fiddle-strings.'

"So Wil'cat he squat down in de bushes nigh de bank an' Hyar' he crope out on de limb, an' dey waited an' dey waited 'twel Wil'cat wuz fair' frazzled. Las', yer come a deer lopin' down ter de water, an' he waded right in an' drunk his fill an' den stood dar dippin' his haid



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in clean up ter de eyes, lookin' fer moss ter eat. Hyar' he 'low ter hisse'f, 'Um-humph! yer whar I gwine roust him outer dat in a hurry. Won' he wunner w'ats got him all uv a suddint?'

"He tucken de time w'en de deer's haid wuz un'need de water ter drap smack onter his back. Co'se de deer 'menced ter ra'r an' splunge an' Hyar' he scrabbled an' schlutched ter hol' on long 'nuff ter jump ter tu'rr bank, but lawsy! ol' man Deer jes' natchelly shuk him off inter de water an' den jumped fer tu'rr bank an' made off inter de woods.

"Hyar' he ses ter hisse'f, 'Now, did any pusson uver see de beat er dat onfren'ly Deer; 'gredge me a li'l foot-hol' on his back! Ef I wuz ez big ez w'at he is I sut'n'y oon be ez mean an' stingy wid my back ez dat.'

"He 'gun ter sink 'bout den, an' he see dar wan't nuttin' fer hit but ter git drownded, so he sing out ter de Wil'cat fer he'p, but shucks! no cat 's gwine git hits paws wet ef hit kin he'p, so he jes' turnt his back an' went off spittin' an' snarlin, 'kase he done los' his dinner.

"'Bout den 'long come a Otter down ter de bank, an' Hyar' he call out fer he'p. He say, sezee, 'Oh, Mistah Otter, he'p me outer dish yer pickle an' I gin you any-thing you wants; 'deed I will!'

"'W'at you gimme?' sez de Otter, sezee.

"'Sho'!' sez ol' Hyar', spittin' and sputterin' an' chokin', 'has I gotter drown w'ile I mek promusses? Git me ouden dis an' den I mek any promuss you ax me to. Ef you gwine he'p me, man, he'p me dis ve'y minnit er hit be too late in de day, an' my def gwine be on yo' haid.'



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“So Otter he swim in, ’kase he wuz a fus’-class swimmer, he wuz, an’ fished ol’ man Hyar’ out an’ set him on de bank at de aidge er de water. Dar he sot all weak an’ trim’lin’, no bigger ’n a han’ful, but he wan’t so fur gone but w’at dar wuz plenty er ’havishness lef’ in him yit, an’ he say ter Otter, sezee, ‘Please, suh, ter lemme run up de bank an’ shake myse’f, so’s’ter git some er de water outen my fur; ’pears lak I done soaked up de hull branch an’ bringed hit out wid me.’

“‘W’y su’n’y,’ sez de Otter, sezee, ‘I knows you is a lan’ man; an’ co’s’e you ain’ useter bein’ in de water, co’s’e you don’ fin’ hit ’greeable. Jes’ g’long an’ shake hit outen you, an’ I’ll wait fer you yer on de bank.’

“‘Wid dat Hyar’ went kitin’ up de bank an’ gin hisse’f a good shake an’ den lipt inter de bushes an’ wuz off lak a house afire. ‘Wait fer me on de bank, suh!’ he sung out, an’ he say ter hisse’f, ‘Yas, suh, I ’spec’ you wait fer me on dat bank one w’ile ’fo’ you see me ag’in.’

“‘Umph!’ sez Otter ter hisse’f, ‘umph! promuss me anything I want an’ den not so much ez stop ter mek his manners! ’Pears lak ’twan’t even a thanky job,’ an’ wid dat he went on ’bout his wu’k in de branch, ’kase he wuz mighty busy ketchin’ fish fer his fambly, fer he wuz a gre’t fisherman an’ a pow’ful swif’ swimmer an’ cu’d jes’ run a fish down in no time ’t all. He ketched him two fish at onct an’ tuck ’em in his mouf an’ went inter his house, w’ich ’twuz a deep hole in de bank. But dough he kep’ on ’bout his bizness, he ain’ fergit dat trick uv ol’ Hyar’s, an’ no mo’ did Mistah Wil’cat, an’ w’en dey tell tu’rr creeturs ’bout him dey all git mo’ riled up ’gins’ him dan befo’, an’ dey ses, ‘Now ain’ dat de wus’ trick yit? Done fool two ’spectable gemmen lak Mistah

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Wil'cat an' Mistah Otter at one an' de same time. Done prove hisse'f one time mo' ez slipp'y an' onreliable ez a eel; mo' chanct er missin' him dan er gittin' him. Nemmine, ef we jes' wait long 'nuff de time boun' ter roll roun' w'en we gwine git de unner-holt, an' den we'll jes' natchelly wipe up de yearf wid him befo' we wipes him clean offen de face er creashun.'

"An' now," concluded Aunt 'Phrony, "y'all chillen neenter pester me no mo' dis night, 'kase my ol' breens is so wo' out wid all dish yer tryin' ter 'member, dat ef you wuz ter crowd me any mo' right now dey mought crack an' let all de tales run out. Wi'yum, quit layin' yo'se'f all over dat flo', same ez a spraddle-bug, an' go an' git de lantu'n an' light dese chillen up ter de house. You year me, suh!"

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One day Aunt Nancy was making little Kit's toilet, trying her best to wash his neck and ears while he fidgeted and dodged and stood first on one foot and then on the other, and declared, after the manner of small boys, that he was not dirty, and if he was, he preferred being so.

"Well, ef uver I 'spected ter year a chil' er my young Miss' talkin' dat scannelous!" she exclaimed. "Anyb'dy mought think 'twuz one'r dem Thompson chillen, on'y I nuver knowed 'em ter talk so much lak po' white-trash. Who uver year er de qual'ty gwine roun' wid dirty years? Hit 'min's me er de time w'en Mistah Efalent oon wash *his* years. Sho! you kin stan' still ter lissen at tales, kin you? Well, now, you jes' hol' right still, lak a good li'l boy, an' lemme git inside dis urr year, an' I tell you de tale w'iles I go 'long."

Here she commenced a not too gentle attack upon the other ear, holding him firmly by the burning member already cleansed, as she told the story of the careless Mr. Elephant, while Janey and Ned listened with a less chastened enjoyment than that of the little boy who was having his ears scrubbed.

"One time," she said, "dar wuz gwine be a big meetin' 'mong's' de creeturs, an' Mistah Efalent he so anxious ter git dar on time dat he plumb fergit ter wash his years.

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Mis' Efalent she wuz a mighty p'tickler ol' lady, an' she call out atter him an' tell him 'bout hit. She say: 'Gracious ter goodness! Mistah Efalent, 'tain' poss'ble you gwine 'mongs' all dem pryin', peerin' creeturs wid dem dirty years? Fer de sake er yo' fambly, come back yer an' fix yo'se'f nice an' proper.' Efalent he let on he ain' year her, jes' lak mens does sometimes w'en der wifes is talkin' at 'em, an' 'twan't mo'n th'ee winks befo' he wuz outer sight an' yearin'.

"Bout dat same time Hyar' he wuz primpin' hisse'f up fer de meetin', 'kase he wuz mighty kyareful 'bout fixin' hisse'f up nice an' clean. He washed his face wid his paw an' licked his fur down an' den got ol' Mis' Molly Hyar' ter wash his years husse'f, an' all roun' behime 'em, so's't de folks whar set behime him in de meetin' kain't excuse him er not bein' neat. Den he had some notion er lettin' on dat he wuz single an' flyin' roun' 'mongs' de gals a li'l, so co'se he wanter look mighty spruce. Las' he start 'off an' git down ter de river 'bout de time Mistah Efalent git dar.

"He bin wunnerin' ter hisse'f how in de name er goodness he gwine git over de river, an' w'en he see de Efalent he say ter hisse'f, he do: 'I sut'n'y is de gre'tes' man fer luck dat uver hopped on fo' laigs. Dish yer whar I gwine git 'cross widout even so much ez gittin' a paw wet.' Wid dat he walked up ter de Efalent an' 'menced muchin' him. 'Howdy, Mistah Efalent,' sezee, 'I hope I fin's you well an' in de enj'ym't er good healt'. You so gre't an' gran', suh, dat I reckon w'en you does git a mis'ry hit boun' ter be a pow'ful big one.'

"'W'at's dis a-talkin' at me?' sez de Efalent, sezee, an' he look all roun' fur an' near an' las' he seed

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Hyar' settin' down mos' unner his front footses an' cuttin' one eye up at him, sassy ez you please. 'Fo' gracious!' sezee, 'look out dar! li'l mo'n I'd a-tromped on you, sho'! Who is you, anyhow?'"

"Den Hyar' he 'mence ter 'splain hisse'f an' tell whar he wuz gwine an' baig Mistah Efalent ter tote him 'cross de river. Hit sut'n'y wuz a sight ter mek you laugh, dey tells me, ter see dat li'l feller settin' up dar on his ha'nches, haid th'owed back so't he cu'd look Efalent in de eye, an' tongue goin' same'z a mill-clapper. Ol' Efalent stood dar squintin' down at him an' lis'nin' at him, w'ile bofe gre't big years went flippitty-flap, flippitty-flap, an' his trunk wuz jes' a-wavin' an' a-weavin' an' a-curlin' roun' thu de air.

"Las' Hyar' he stop 'long 'nuff ter git bref, an' Efalent he say, sezee, 'Shucks! man, I kain't stop to tote you over de river; I must be at de meetin' on time.'

"'Lawsy!' Hyar' 'low, 'tain' gwine teck you long ter tote a li'l feller lak me.'

"Dat mek Mistah Efalent laugh an' he say, sezee, 'How sech a li'l feller ez you gwine stick on my back?'

"'Oh, nemmine,' sezee; 'I tell you de way we kin fix hit. Jes' you teck an' putt me inside er one'r yo' years an' let de flap down over me ter keep me in, an' I boun' you, I go over safe an' soun'.'

"'All right,' sez de Efalent, sezee, an' he tuck an' tuck his trunk an' wrop hit roun' Hyar' an' gin him a whu'l thu de air dat tucken his bref clean 'way, an' he lan'ed him in de year an' shet de flap down on him. Den he splunge inter de river an' 'mence ter cross over.

"Co'se Hyar' ain' bin in de year long 'twel he 'gun ter study w'at mischief ter git inter. He 'mence ter



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fidget roun' an' wu'k his nose hard an' sniff lak he smell sump'n pow'ful bad.

"'Wa't's de marter wid you?" sez de Efalent, sezee.

"Hyar' he 'spon', 'Oh, nuttin' 't all, Mistah Efalent; don' you min' me, suh; jes' go right 'long.'

"Pres'n'y he go at hit ag'in, jes' sniffin' an' kyar'yin' on. 'Um-m-m-umph! umph! umph!! umph!!!' sezee, hol'in' his nose lak he kain't stan' ter keep hit open.

"'Gre't king!' sez de Efalent, 'w'at is de marter wid de li'l cuss, anyhow's?"

"'Don' pay no 'tention ter me, suh,' Hyar' say. 'I has de as'my an' dat mek me breave hard; soun' mighty loud, 'kase I'se right inside yo' year.'

"Well, suh, he kep' hit up dat-a-way on de trip over, an' w'en dey git ter tu'rr side he watch his chanct w'en Mistah Efalent flip his year up an' den he jes' lit down same'z he bin made er injy-rubber an' tuck up de bank an' inter de bresh 'fo' Efalent miss him ouden de year. He curl his trunk roun' an' feel fer him, but he kain't fin' him. Den he think mebbe he done fergot w'ich year he putt him in, an' so he feel in tu'rr one. Naw, suh, he wan't in tu'rr one, neener. 'Well, ef dis don' beat my time!' sezee; 'I sut'n'y putt dat owdacious creetur in my year. 'Tain' poss'bl' dat I cu'd go an' dream sech ez dat,' an' he stan' dar jes' a-huffin' an' a-puffin'.

"Hyar' he bin watchin' him an' he tuck de 'casion ter stick his haid outer de bresh an' say: 'To be sho' you wan't dreamin', Mistah Efalent; I wuz in yo' year, sho' 'nuff, an' a mighty bad time I have uv hit in dar. You axed me, suh, w'at wuz de marter, an' now I gwine tell you, dough I'se saw'y ef I seem onmannerly atter





“ 'Tain' Poss'bl' Dat I Cu'd Go An' Dream ” *Page 196*

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you teekin' me 'cross; but I'se 'bleeged ter say, suh, dat you done fergot ter wash yo' years dis mawnin', *dat* you has, an' I 'clar' ter goodness hit mek me feel plumb faintyfied in dar w'en you shet dat flap down on me; 'deed hit did. Nex' time you teck anyb'dy in yo' year, better see dat hit's clean. So-long, suh; so-long.' An' wid dat he shuk one'r his behime footses at de Efalent f'um roun' de cornder uv a tree an' wuz off in a jiff, leavin' dat gre't big creetur stannin' dar jes' a-trim'lin' an' a-stompin' an' a-foamin' an' a-snortin' an' tearin' up trees by de roots, but 'tain' do him no good, fer Hyar' wuz outer sight by dat time, fur on his way ter de meetin'.

"An' now," finished Aunt Nancy, as she gave a last twist to one of Kit's long, yellow curls, "dat shows y'all w'at happen ter folks whar ain' 'tickler 'bout keepin' der years clean. Dey think no pusson gwine notuss, but someb'dy sho' ter fin' hit out an' mek fun uv 'em an' hol' 'em up fer a disgrace ter der fambly an' de qual'ty in gin'l."

Here she carefully threw the combings that had accumulated in the making of the little boy's toilet into the fire, explaining that if they were thrown away and not burned, the birds might find them and use them in nest-building, in which case the person from whose head the hair came would be sure to go crazy; nothing could avert the fate.

THE TOAD AND THE TERRAPIN

When Aunt Nancy had finished curling the small boy's hair, he insisted that she owed him another story, because she had not only hurt his ears, but had given his hair an unlucky pull. She objected at first, saying that she had other fish to fry and must go along about her work. At last she relented so far as to say that she would tell one if she could only think of something new. "I done tol' you so many tales," she said, "dat I done used all de creeturs up, runned 'em plumb inter de groun'."

"I know one you haven't told us about for a long time," said Janey, "and that's the Toad-frog; you told us a story about him a long time ago and I liked it. It was all about the Hopper-grass and the Chicken-rooster."

Aunt Nancy felt flattered that her story should have made such a lasting impression, and it seemed to have a happy effect upon her memory, for she said at once that she believed she did recollect another story in which the Toad figured, along with the Terrapin.

"Hit wuz 'long in strawba'y-time," she commenced, "an' Toad-frog he say ter hisse'f dat he jes' natchelly 'bleeged ter have him a mess er ba'ies, 'kase he ain' had none dat 'ear, an' he wuz 'tickler fond uv 'em."

Here Ned interrupted to say, "Ho! Aunt Nancy, who ever heard of a toad eating strawberries?"

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"Well, dey does, den," said the story teller, indignantly; "I done seed 'em at hit wid my own eyes; an' snakes does, too; dey is bofe mighty fond uv 'em. You neenter think folks is de on'ies ones whar knows a good thing w'en dey sees hit. Does you s'pose de Lawd mek de good things jes' fer people an' don' want de creeturs ter git der sheer? Naw, suh, He want 'em ter go sheers; but folks done got so mean dat dey calls hit stealin' w'en de bu'ds an' de bees an' de wast-es comes atter de grapes an' de churries an' de ba'ies an' sech ez dat.

"Well, I done tol' you strawba'ies wuz ripe an' Toad-frog wuz jes' a-honin' fer some. He wuz gwine hoppin' down de road, singin' dis ol' song ter hisse'f:

*'Dar wuz a mouse live' in a house,
Wid a rinktum boddy middy kimo,
Dar wuz a frog live in a well,
Wid a rinktum boddy middy kimo,
'An' ef he ain' gone he live dar still,
Wid a rinktum boddy middy kimo.
Kimo-narrow, delto-sharrow,
Rinktum boddy middy kimo,
String-strong pommy-doodle ally-mody ding-
dong,
Rinktum boddy middy kimo.'*

"Jes' ez he git dat fur along wid de song who shu'd he met up wid but ol' Mis' Tarry-long Tarr'pin. Now she wuz mighty fond er strawba'ies husse'f, an' she knowed whar dar wuz a baid er nice, big ripe ones, an' she wuz right on her way to 'em den. Mos' in gin'l

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she wuz a turr'bl' slow trabeler, but dish yer mawnin' she wuz gwine 'long right peartly. W'en Toad-frog seed dat, he 'spicioned sump'n wuz up, an' he say ter hisse'f, he say: 'Humph! ol' Mis' Tarr'pin sho' has got a move on husse'f dis mawnin'. Now, w'at is de meanin' er dat? Lemme see, she got a mighty good likin' fer strawba'ies, an' I boun' you she's right on her way to 'em dis minnit, ef de trufe wuz knowed. De ol' lady got lots er gumption, an' I reckon she know jes' whar dey're a-growin'. I gwine tackle her an' see ef I kain't git ter go 'long.'

"Wid dat he hop up 'long side er Mis' Tarr'pin an' he say, sezee: 'Heyo! Mis' Tarry-long, I ain' need ter ax you, how is you? you gwine 'long yer so gaily I sca'cely knowed you. I wanter ax you, ma'am, kin you tell me whar dey is any strawba'ies? I ain' had nair' one dis 'ear, an' my appentite gittin' so deliken dat I needs sump'n lak dat ter putt me in de notion er eatin' ag'in. You sech a smart lady dat I 'lowed you'd know whar dey wuz some, ef anyb'dy did.'

"Mis' Tarr'pin she wan't gwine gin her sekert away, so she let on she dunno nuttin' 'bout 'em an' ain' kyarin' fer 'em, anyhow. 'Sho! man, g'way f'um yer,' she say; 'w'at you reckon I know 'bout strawba'ies? I nuver eats 'em; I ain' got no mouf fer 'em.'

"Toad-frog seed he wan't gwine git nuttin' ouden her dat-a-way, so he jes' mek up his min' ter co'te her a li'l an' see ef dat oon wu'k. 'A li'l co'tin' sometimes go a long ways wid a gal,' sezee ter hisse'f; 'jes' a few li'l honey-wu'ds an' dar dey is.'

"He 'mence bein' mighty flattersome to her an' talkin' all sorts er sweet talk, lak men does w'en dey's

THE TOAD AND THE TERRAPIN

co'tin', dough dey mos' alluz 'ny hit, out an' out, atter-wu'ds. Las' he up an' ax her ain' she want'er git ma'ied.

"She 'low, 'Naw, suh, dat I don'; not ter no sech li'l jumpin' thing ez w'at you is.'

"Toad-frog laugh fit ter kill hisse'f, an' he say, sezee: 'G'long wid you, gal, I ain' ax' you ter have me; I axed you does you want'er git ma'ied, jes' in fun, ter see w'at you gwine say. I ain' axin' none er de gals dese days; 'scuse me, ef *you* please. Dis de time w'en you done hollered befo' you wuz hurted.'

"Dat mek Mis' Tarr'pin mad, an' she say: 'Hysh, man! g'long 'way f'um yer; I done had 'nuff er yo' imp'ence. W'at's mo', I gwine tell ev'y pusson I knows dat you done ax me ter ma'y you an' I oon have you. You s'pose any er de gals gwine look at you w'en I tell 'em dat? Naw, suh. W'en I p'int you out an' snicker an' snort an' say: "Look yonner, gals! Yonner goes my leavin's."'

"'Yas'm, dat dey is,' sezee; 'men-folks ain' so plenty dat gals kin give dersefs too many extry airs. Sidesen dat, I kin tell my side uv hit: how you done mistaken a joke fer a sho'-'nuff axin'; an' den whar'll you be, Mis' Tarry-long?"

"At dat she turn her back on him an' walk off. Toad-frog he ain' say nuttin' mo', 'scusin' ter tell 'er 'so-long.' Den he mek out lak he gwine hop off tu'rr way, but, bless yo' soul, no sooner wuz her back good an' turnt dan yer come Toad-frog, w'ich his tu'rr name wuz Jimmy Jump-er-long, an' gin a li'l jump an' dar he wuz, settin' up on her back, ridin' 'long jes' ez cool ez a cowcumber, an' ol' Mis' Tarr'pin nuver even 'spicion he wuz dar, 'kase her back so hard she kain't feel him.

AT THE BIG HOUSE

"Dey went 'long dat-a-way, Toad-frog perched up dar cuttin' all sorts er shines, doin' lak he wuz clickin' his mouf at a hoss, widout mekin' no soun', an' stannin' on one foot, wid tu'rr laig stuck up behime in de air, fer all de worl' lak dem bar'back riders at de succus.

"Las' Mis' Tarr'pin she stop, an' de place whar she done turn inter wuz nuttin' mo' ner less dan a straw-ba'y-patch. Toad-frog hopped down, an' sezee, 'Kreech! kreech! kreech! I'se ma'ied a'raidy, so how cu'd I ax you ter ma'y me? Tell me dat, ma'am.'



"Mis' Tarr'pin sut'n'y wuz s'prise' w'en she see dat creetur hop down f'um her back. She say: 'Name er common sense, how you git on my back, you owdacious vil'yun? Ma'ied a'raidy, is you? Well, I sut'n'y is saw'y fer de ooman. Who is she, anyways? I ain' nuver year tell uv her.'

"'Kreech! kreech! kreech!' sez de Toad-frog, sezee. 'Tain' no ooman 't all. I'se wedded ter dese yer ba'ies; dey is my fus' an' my las' an' my on'ies love,' an' wid dat he fall ter eatin' hard'z he kin swoller.

"Mis' Tarry-long Tarr'pin she say ter herse'f, she say: 'I'm er min' ter gin 'im one good bite dat he kain't fergit in a hurry, but I 'clar' ter gracious, I'se dat disguss'id dat I ain' gwine sile my mouf wid him. Nemmine, Mistah Jimmy Jump-er-long, you stuffin' yo'se'f full er my ba'ies an' you feel mighty smart over hit, but some er dese days I gwine mek you smart on tu'rr side yo' mouf.' Wid dat she walk off an' leave him eatin', an' 'twuz good thing fer him she did, 'kase, I tell you, she wuz a nipper; an' ef she'd a-bit him he oon bin able ter fergit hit in a mont' er Sundays."



Toad-Frog Perched Up Dar Curtin' All Sorts Er Shines

THE TOAD AND THE TERRAPIN

"Aunt Nancy," said Janey, "what did the toad mean when he said 'kreech! kreech! kreech?'"

"Oh, dat 'uz jes' his way er talkin'," said the old woman.

"I never knew toads made any sound at all," said the little girl.

"Oh, yas, dey does; hit's jes' lak I tells you: 'kreech! kreech! kreech!' sump'n 'twix' de chu'ppin' uv a bu'd an' de skreekin' uv a mouse. Many's de time I bin down cellar an' think I year a mouse skreekin' an' git all skeert an' flutterated, an' yer all time 'twuz nuttin' but a li'l toad-frog whar wuz tryin' ter git outen my way."

MR. MUD-TURTLE'S ADVENTURE

The next day the children went down to the river for the first time, under the guidance and protection of William, who knew the short cut through the low-grounds and just which were the places where you were most likely to get a bite, for the river and he were old and dear acquaintances and had communed together through many a long, sunny day. The river had imparted many of its choicest secrets to him, for there is no one with whom Madam Nature lives on closer terms of intimacy and sympathy than with that wholly untrammelled and entirely natural animal, known as "The Boy."

William was the possessor of a vast store of information dear to the heart of childhood, and was never better pleased than when called upon to impart some of his knowledge to the less enlightened. He knew and could imitate the notes of the birds and the cries of the beasts. He could tell when spring was approaching or summer departing by the arrival or departure of certain birds, or the preparations made by certain animals. He could tell time by looking at the sun and was learned in weather-signs. He had other information, besides, of a lesser but more practical sort, for he knew the whereabouts of a shellbark hickory, the only one for miles around, and had located a persimmon tree whose crop

MR. MUD-TURTLE'S ADVENTURE

never failed and whose fruit was described as "mon-st'ous" for size. He knew how to make a running noose, and could lasso a fleeing calf with the ease born of long practice. He was an authority on jack-knives, and could carve peach-stone baskets, make slings and whistles and manufacture bows and arrows. He was well up in marbles and knew just how many "commies" to give for an "ally," and how many allies for a "glassy," and if he played "for keeps" was pretty sure to do all the keeping.

"Jack-straws" and "mumble-the-peg" were also among his lighter accomplishments, but the one which exalted him most in the eyes of the children was his skill as a bareback rider. As he rode a big horse to water, sitting sidewise, whooping and digging his naked feet into the animal to urge him to greater speed, their admiration was unbounded. Yet this was not the end of his resources, for he could take you to a wonderful grapevine swing, in which you could swing perilously out over the edge of a deep hollow, holding your breath fearfully until you landed on *terra firma* again; or he could pilot you to an old peach-tree which exuded enough gum to supply a dozen children; or he could take you to a place where Indian arrow-heads were still to be found; and added to all this, he knew a spot in the garden where the youthful fishermen could always find worms for bait.

He was important and happy as he marshaled his little company down to the bank of the dark, sluggish river that, like some noiselessly gliding snake, wound in and out beneath the cypresses and the pines. He chose a safe spot for the children, near a shallow, and baited

AT THE BIG HOUSE

hooks all around, and then, removing himself a short distance, sat immovable, pole in hand and bait in mouth, waiting for a bite with all the patient impatience of the born angler.

His little companions found too much to look at and wonder about and talk over to make a success at fishing, and they sadly interfered with his sport; but after a while they tired of waiting for a bite and wandered up and down the bank in search of shells and bright pebbles and all the other treasures which generous rivers lay out upon their banks within reach of small hands. Then they wandered a little way into the bushes in search of woodland treasures, and at last, growing tired, they rested beneath a tree, while little Kit laid his head in Janey's lap and fell fast asleep. Here Aunt 'Phrony found them when she came to say that dinner was ready.

"Whar dat boy Wi'yum?" she asked; "fishin' yit, I'll be boun'! Jes' let him git a pole in his han' an' he nuver know ef he's 'wake er sleep er full er empty. Wi'yum! You Wi'yum! Kain't you arnser me, er is I gotter come dar an' stomp all over you!"

However, she was not forced to administer correction in that comprehensive form, for just then Wi'yum gave an excited whoop, as though to announce something important, and on hurrying down they found him in the act of securing a good-sized mud-turtle. Aunt 'Phrony lent her aid, in as great a state of excitement as Wi'yum himself, whom she advised to be very careful or he might lose his turtle, for "mud-turkles," she said, were "mighty slickry an' onsut'n, an' lessen you keeps a sharp eye

MR. MUD-TURTLE'S ADVENTURE

on 'em dey may git 'way f'um you, same ez dat trickish ol' Mistah Mud-turkle git 'way f'um de creeturs one time w'en dey thought dey sho'-nuff had 'im. Ef y'all hurry up yo' cakes an' ga'rr yo' trash toge'rr an' come 'long home dis ve'y minnit, mebbe I'll tell you dat tale ez we go 'long."

The treasures so disrespectfully referred to as "trash" were caught up in great haste and the homeward procession formed, Wi'yum leading the way, proudly bearing the mud-turtle.

"Well, ez I wuz sayin'," the old woman went on, "Mistah Mud-turkle he wuz a mighty slickry man, an' he bin up ter mo' tricks dan you kin shake a stick at, an' he git right onpop'lous wid de creeturs. He knowed dey wuz sort er layin' fer 'im, an' ev'ry now an' den he'd come up f'um de bottom er de river an' ketch 'em on de bank watchin' fer 'im. Den he'd kick his behime laigs up in de air at 'em an' dive down wid a gre't splash. Atter a li'l he'd come up ag'in, unner de shadder uv a big lily pad, an' lay jes' below de top er de water wid his snout out ter git de air, watchin' de creeturs whar wuz layin' fer him. W'en dey wan't lookin' he'd climb up on de log ag'in, an' ef dey showed signs er mekin' a snatch at 'im, down he'd go wid anu'rr splash.

"One time dey ketched 'im w'en he bin mo' rantankerous dan uver befo', an' dey ses to 'im, 'Mistah Mud-turkle, we is ve'y saw'y we hatter speak so plain ter you, but de trufe is we done gin you a long rope an' now you is come ter de plumb een' uv hit an' we kain't pay out no mo', we 'bleeged ter pull you up shawt on de road you is gwine, an' we'se sut'n'y saw'y ter fotch you

AT THE BIG HOUSE



up wid a ju'k but we done made up ow' min's dat we mus' do hit emejately, so we gwine exescoot you on de spot.'

"Ol' Mud-turkle he 'suade an' he 'suade an' he 'suade, but 'twan't no use, an' las' he say, 'Gemmen, dish yer is mighty hard on bofe un us, 'kase I 'low dat you ain' hone ter do dis an' I knows I ain' hone ter have hit done, but ef exescoot is de w'ud, w'y den exescoot mus' be de deed. But I ax y'all, gemmen, 'kase you is fambly men, same ez me, ter please lemme go home an' bid far'well ter my ol' ooman an' de chillens.'

"Den he drord down one er his th'ee pairs er eyeleds an' sot dar lookin' jes' ez sleepy ez you please an' ez harmless ez ef he ain' nuver koted an' et even so much ez a frog er a tadpole.

"De creeturs wuz might'ly tickled by w'at he ax 'bout goin' home ter bid far'well, but dey wan't tucken in by hit, so dey ses, 'Saw'y not ter 'commodate you, but to-day's right yer an' to-morrer's right dar, an' de bu'd in de han' 's wuf two in de bush, so you mought ez well mek yo' reddymints an' say yo' pra'rs, 'kase we is gwine putt you in de midse er dish yer big fire we buildin' up, an' dat 'll mek sho' you kain't cut no mo' er yo' highfalutins in dese diggin's.'

"Turkle he wuz kind er cas' down fer a minnit, an' sot dar wid his jaw drapt, but pres'n'y he git a notion dat perk him up might'ly, an' he say, 'Sho! you-all done tucken so much trouble 'bout dat fire dat I is mos' 'shame' ter tell you, yo' wu'k ain' gwine 'mount ter shucks, 'kase I wuz bawnded an' brunged up in de fire, an' ef dar is one place mo'n a nu'rr whar I feels at home, hits spang in de fire.'





“Hi, Yi! Gemmen, How is Dish Yer Fer A Exercooshun?”

MR. MUD-TURTLE'S ADVENTURE

"Den de creeturs go off li'l ways an' have a confab, an' den dey come back an' putt a big pot er water on de fire, an' w'en hit git ter bilin', dey ses, 'Well, Mistah Mud-turkle, yo' time is sho'ly come now, fer onct you strike dat bilin' water we gwine th'ow you in, hit 'll be good-by, Mistah Mud-turkle.'

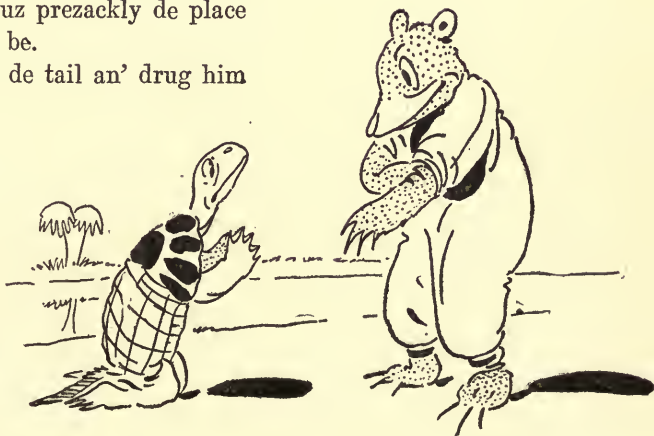
"Den he say, sezee, 'Gemmen, I'se saw'y ter see you was'e so much er yo' time on a no-kyount creetur lak me, so I gwine tell you you kain't kill me dat-a-way. I ain' min' ef you putt me in de pot, 'kase all I gotter do be ter scrabble roun' a li'l an' kick out my footses, an' I got sech strenk in 'em dat firs' news you know de pot be over an' mo'n likely some er you-all whar ain' got a shell on you be scalt stidder me. I'se saw'y ter upsot yo' plans, but I be boun' ter upsot de pot, dat's de gospel trufe.'

"By dat time de creeturs wuz kind er outdone, an' dey say, 'Le's we-all tek de mis'able ol' bag-er-shucks an' th'ow him ker-smack inter de river, I boun' you dat be big 'nuff so's't he kain't kick outen hit.'

"Ol' Turkle he snicker ter hisse'f w'en he year dat, 'kase he see dey done fergot he b'long in de river. Den he say wid a turr'ble whine in his voice, 'Oh, please, gemmen, fer de love er mussy don' you go fer ter th'ow me in de river. Kill me any way you wanten, but not dat; seem lak I kain't stan' hit ter be at de bottom er de col', dark river.'

"He kep' gwine on dat-a-way 'kase he knowed de creeturs be sho' ter putt him dar ef dey think he ain' wanten go, but in co'se de river wuz prezackly de place whar he b'long an' whar he wanten be.

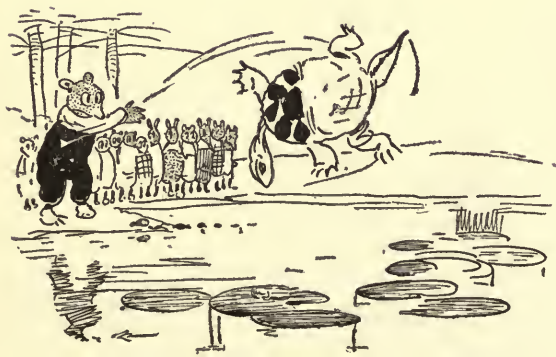
"Sho' 'nuff! dey tucken him by de tail an' drug him



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down to de river, him baiggin' all de time, 'Oh, please, suh, lemme go! Please don' do me dis-a-way! Lemme off dis time an' I ain' do so no mo'!' De creeturs ain' pay no 'tention but go right on an' th'ow him inter de deepes' place whar dey kin fin'. W'en he git ter de bottom he laid dar still ez a mouse, not even so much ez twitchin' his tail, an' dey thought he wuz sho'-nuff daid an' went off an' lef' him.

"W'en dey git off a piece, he open one eye mighty kyarful an' wall hit roun' a li'l an' seed de coas' wuz cle'r. Den he 'gun ter climb out on tu'rr bank. W'en he wuz clean up on de bank an' knowed dey cu'dden git 'cross to him, he fetched a big whoop, an' w'en dey turn roun' ter look he sing out, 'Hi, yi! gemmen, how is dish yer fer a exescooshun? Come 'long over yer an' exescoot me some mo'! I'se feelin' tol'ble lively fer a cawpse, I is!' An' wid dat he fatched anu'rr whoop an' dove down de bank inter water, haid fo'most, an' lef' 'em dar fair foamin' at de mouf. An' I reckon we better be hurryin' 'long li'l faster'n we has bin, er 'Liza *she* be foamin' at de mouf, too, 'kase you done kep' de dinner waitin'. Cooks is mighty tetchy 'bout dat."



THE CRANE AND THE HUMMING-BIRD

The long visit to Uncle Henry was nearly at an end. Next day but one the children and their mother were to go North again. So it came about that the little folks were once more permitted to spend the evening at the cook-house, where there was a goodly gathering, presided over by the little hunch-backed cook, Eliza, who, as she would have said, had sent out "noration" that there was to be a grand story-telling for the benefit of the little white children who were so soon to leave them. Sam, the driver, was there, beaming on his elderly enchantress with every white tooth in his head. Tim, the plow-boy, had brought his banjo and was happy in the presence of his coy charmer, Cassy. Aunt 'Phrony's grandson, "Wi'yum," was also present, while Coonie, the house-boy, constant in his devotion to everything eatable, was seated on the hearth engaged in roasting potatoes in the ashes.

Of course the two story-tellers, Aunt Nancy and Aunt 'Phrony, were present, for the occasion would have been as nothing without them. These last were rather shy of beginning, saying that they "wan't feelin' quite up ter hit yit," so, by way of raising their spirits to the desired pitch, Tim picked his banjo a while, Wi'yum did the famous "back-step" and Coonie executed a curious dance, the performance of which he called "knockin'

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de 'rang-a-'tang," during which he thumped his feet on the floor in such an emphatic manner that it seemed as if something must give way—either feet or floor. But neither did, and the dance reached a safe conclusion amidst a great deal of applause and laughter.

At last the turn of the story-tellers came, and Aunt 'Phrony allowed herself to be persuaded to begin. She said she would tell the story of the Humming-bird and the Crane, as it contained some good advice to young men who were courting, and here she rolled her eyes in a meaning way at Tim and Cassy.

"I reckon," she began, "dat mens bin co'tin' gals uver sence de beginnin' er time, an' I een-about reckon dey gwine keep hit up ontwel de een'. W'at's mo', de gals alluz bin runnin' on wid 'em, laughin' at 'em one time, cryin' 'bout 'em anu'rr, turnin' der backs on 'em one minnit, runnin' atter 'em de nex'; an' I s'pose dey gwine keep up dat foolishness long ez de worl' wag. Back in de ol' days, dar wuz a gal whar live way out yonner som'ers; a mighty harnsome, likely sort er gal, an' all de creeturs wuz plumb crazy over her, an' 'spute an' kyar' on 'bout who gwine git her, an' sometimes dey had reg'ler fist-an'-skull fights 'bout hit. De gal she wuz mighty nice to 'em all, runnin' on wid 'em an' sof'-sawderin' each one w'en she git him off by hisse'f, 'twel he think he'z de one she gwine choose, fer sho'. Dat-away she keep 'em all projeckin' roun' her day in an' day out, 'kase she thought she cu'd git ma'ied any time she git raidy ter quit her foolishness, jes' de way dese yer good-facetet gals is mighty ap' ter think dey kin' do, dough sometimes dey keeps hit up jes' a li'l too long an' fines derse'fs high an' dry on de she'f. Las' her folks

THE CRANE AND THE HUMMING-BIRD

git 'feard dat mebbe dat de way *she* gwine do, an' dey tell her she mus' mek her ch'ice an' git ma'ied.

"De bu'ds dey wuz kind er lis'nin' roun', an' dey got de news er dis firs', an' dey ses ter one nu'rr dat dey gwine 'cide de marter wid a race, startin' 'way off f'um de gal's house an' w'ichuver got dar fus' wuz ter have her.

"Gal she ain' say nuttin', jes' grin at 'em all lak she alluz do, an' dey g'long off ter de startin' place jes' mo'n 'sputin' an' argyfyin' wid one nu'rr. Las' dey got so rantankerous dat mos' un 'em wuz plumb 'feard ter go inter de race fer fear dey mought be tore limb f'um limb ef dey did git de gal. Las' dar wan't but th'ee lef' dat wuz willin' ter mek de trial, an' dem wuz de Tukkey an' de Crane an' de Hummin'-bu'd. Tukkey he start off mighty biggitty an' flewed a li'l ways at a big bus' er speed, but he wuz too haivy ter keep dat up long, so he lit an' tried ter run 'long de groun', but sho! he done fer-got de time de cunjerers putt a lot er li'l bones in his laigs so's't he cu'dden run fas'. He seed tu'rr bu'ds wuz gittin' so fur ahaid uv him dat 'twan't no use ter try, so he say ter hisse'f, sezee: 'Shucks! let me outen dis; I ain' want nuttin' ter do wid no sech a hurrah's-nes' ez dish yer is; dar ain' no gals livin' dat's wuf hit. Lemme git back ter my home an' stay dar in peace an' quiet.' So he went swingin' off home, an' dat lef' nob'dy in de race but de Crane an' de Hummin'-bu'd.

"De Crane mighty sho' he gwine beat, 'kase he have sech long laigs, an' Hummin'-bu'd sho' he cu'd beat, 'kase er de swif'ness uv his wings. Crane say ter hisse'f, sezee, 'Humph! I ain' got dese yer long laigs fer nuttin'; I gwine beat dat li'l no-kyount Hummin'-bu'd ter

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flinders,' an' Hummin'-bu'd he say ter hisse'f, sezee, 'Shucks! how kin dat gre't, gawkin', long-legged creetur think he gwine keep up wid me? Hit's plumb rank foolishness fer me ter keep goin' night an' day, so I jes' gwine res' me off good at night, an' in de mawnin' I kin soon ketch up wid ol' Crane an' pass him on de road.'

"So Hummin'-bu'd he res' off all night, an' Crane he go on an' on, an' w'en mawnin' come an' he see dat Hummin'-bu'd ain' kotch up wid him, he say ter hisse'f, he say, 'Lazy li'l rascal, I boun' you he 'z sleepin' yit, an' I 'spec' de sun be good an' high befo' he crawls out, so I jes' gwine stop right yer at dis pond an' git me a snack er frogs, 'kase dish yer night-trabel done wo' me to a frazzle an' lef' me empty ez a go'de.' Wid dat he stop at de aidge er de pond an' stan' dar on one laig, waitin' an' watchin' fer de frogs. He wuz a pow'ful good fisherman an' mighty fond er frogs. He cu'd spy 'em an' run 'em thu wid his bill 'fo' dey knowed w'at had 'em. He stood dar stuffin' an' stuffin' hisse'f 'twel he clean fergot how de time wuz passin', an' fus' news he knew yer come de Hummin'-bu'd an' pass him lak a streak er lightnin'. He call out ez he pass, 'Heyo! Mistah Crane, teckin' hit easy, I see, suh. Dat's right; don' yo' hurry yo'se'f fer nuttin' ner nob'dy, let 'lone a gal. So-long, suh; hope you git dar in time fer de weddin'.' Crane he hurry hisse'f might'ly atter dat, but he wuz stuff' so full dat trabelin' wuz hard wu'k, an' he ain' see Hummin'-bu'd ag'in *dat* day.

"Well, dey kep' hit up dat-a-way, one stoppin' ter res' by night an' tu'rr stoppin' ter eat by day, 'twel de las' day done come. Crane he 'cide ter do widout a snack



THE CRANE AND THE HUMMING-BIRD

dat day, an' he putt on a big bus' uv speed an' got ter de gal's house 'bout noon. Jes' a minnit atter, yer come



Hummin'-bu'd, all a-flutterin' an' a-flusterin', an' dat mad dat he ain' kin see straight, 'kase he los' de race

AT THE BIG HOUSE

jes' by dat one minnit. De trufe wuz he done overslep' hisse'f er he moughter beat ol' Crane widout half tryin'.

"Now de gal she wanted de Hummin'-bu'd ter beat, an' she wuz might'ly putt out w'en she see de Crane wuz de winner, so she mek up her min'. dat she oon tek neener one uv 'em, an' w'en Crane step up ter claim her she say, 'Naw, suh, 'scuse me, suh. Nex' time you mek a bargum I 'vize you ter ax de cornsent er de lady. Y'all tol' me you gwine run a race, but is you uver year me say I gwine ma'y de winner? Naw, suh, I ain' say nuttin' 't all. Mistah Crane, yer, he done think heap mo' uv his dinner dan he do er me, an' Mistah Hummin'-bu'd think too much uv his natchel slumbers, an' you bofe done bin too sho' er gittin' me. You mus' nuver be sho' uv anything w'en you'se co'tin' a gal, leas' uv all, de gal husse'f. An' now I ain' gwine teck neener one'r you. I gwine teck dish yer King-fisher whar bin settin' yer jes' a-cotin' an' a-cotin' me w'ile y'all bin off on dat race.'

"So dat de way she tuck an' done, an' de Crane an' de Hummin'-bu'd jes' hatter turn tails an' go home, an' my daddy, w'en he tol' me de tale, say dat uver sence den, w'en de medincin'-men cunjer ter fin' out who gwine ma'y who, dey names de onlucky beads atter de Crane an' de Hummin'-bu'd, an' de lucky bead dey call atter de King-fisher."

THE FOX AND THE HOT POTATOES

After the story of the Crane and the Humming-bird, 'Liza, playing the rôle of impartial hostess, called on Aunt Nancy to take part in entertaining the company.

"Naw, *ma'am*, Sis' 'Liza, please 'scuse me dis evenin'," said she; "de mis'ry in my footses dat bad dey feels lak two plumb chunks er pain, an' my haid ache me so's't I kain't year myse'f think, let 'lone study 'bout sech ez dem ol' tales. You please, *ma'am*, ter 'scuse me."

But the company fully understood that, like many an entertainer in more exalted circles of society, Aunt Nancy wanted coaxing, and between their compliments on the one hand and on the other sundry sniffs from Aunt 'Phrony, which seemed intended to cast discredit upon the old woman's miseries of head and feet, she was finally induced to relent.

She was about to begin, when she fell to laughing immoderately at Coonie, who had burned his fingers in pulling a hot potato from the ashes, and was sucking them vigorously with many grimaces and exclamations. When she could speak for laughing, she explained that it had reminded her of one time when Mr. Fox pulled hot potatoes from the ashes for the benefit of Mis' Molly Hare and her family.

"'Twuz one winter night," she said, "one'r dem nights w'en ol' Jack Fros' jes' goes a-whoopin' an' a-hollerin' roun' de house, whustlin' thu de keyholes, an' rattlin'

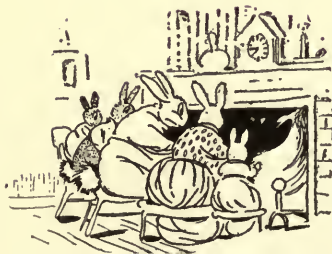
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de winders, an' retchin' up thu de cracks in de flo' an' pinchin' folks by de toes. Ol' man Hyar' an' Mis' Hyar' an' de chillen wuz all scrunched up by de fire tryin' ter keep wo'm, waitin' an' watchin' fer de 'taters whar wuz roas'in' in de ashes.

"'Lawsy! lawsy!' sez de ol' man, stretchin' hisse'f an' knockin' de ashes outen his pipe, 'lowsy! lawsy! dar ain' nuttin' in dis livin' worl' gwine roust me outen de house dis night. I gwine stay right yer 'long wid y'all an' toas' my shins an' smoke my pipe. Hits col' 'nuff outside ter freeze de hawns offen a buff'ler. Ol' ooman, git out de cider-jug an' le's we have a li'l dram all roun' ter wo'm us up, an' by dat time de 'taters 'll be good an' done.' So Mis' Hyar' she drammed 'em all roun' wid cider, an' den she 'mence ter scratch out de 'taters, w'ile de chillen sot up on der ha'nches watchin' her wid der big, bright eyes an' wu'kkin' der noses an' smackin' der chops lak dey kain't sca'cely wait. Dat mus' 'a bin a sight, Mis' Molly scratchin' 'way in de ashes wid her li'l ol' white cotton tail turnt up in de air an' her behime footses jes' a-flyin'.

"W'ile she wuz wu'kkin', de chillen dey wuz grabbin' de 'taters, an' de ol' man he hatter do a li'l cuffin' an' scoldin'. He say, 'You Jumper an' Thumper! I want you ter stop snatchin' f'um Bunny an' Honey; dem's de babies, an' dey kain't look out fer derse'fs; you orter be 'shame' er yo'se'fs! Winker an' Blinker, you neenter think I dunno you'se snougin' 'taters an' hidin' 'em behime yo' backs. Putt 'em back an' go sheers all roun', er I come dar an' cuff you good, so he'p me bob!'

"Mis' Hyar' she go on scratchin' an' she git mighty wo'm. Las' her footses 'mence ter smart, and she say,



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'Lan' er de livin'! dish yer too hot fer me; lemme git out whar I kin cool my paws; nemmine ef I gits de chilblains; mought 'z well freeze up ez burn up.'

"Wid dat she mek fer de do', an' w'en dey open hit, dar stood Mistah Fox, jes' a-shiverin' an' a-shakin' wid



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de col'. Mis' Molly she say, 'Heyo! Mistah Fox; dish yer's a nice, wo'm evenin' you done s'lected fer yo' visit. Will you have a cheer jes' outside de do'?'

"Fox he say, wid his toofs jes' a-clatterin' an' a-chat-terin', sezee, 'Please, ma'am, Mis' Molly Cotton-tail, ter lemme come in dis ve'y minnit an' don' stan' dar pro-jeckin' wid me, 'kase I is friz ter de marrer an' I'se 'bleeged ter git thawed out er else drap right yer in my tracks.'

"'Well,' sez Molly, sez she, 'I dunno 'bout lettin' you in; dish yer a mighty col' night, an' we-all got jes' a han'ful er fire an' a lot er paws ter be wo'med at hit, fer you know I got some 'leven er mo' chillen in my fambly, but I reckon I mought mek out ter let you in ef you'll unnerteck de job er diggin' a lot er 'taters outen de ashes.'

"'Lemme git in,' sez de Fox, sezee, 'I'se good fer all night at dat job; jes' lemme git my footses in dem ashes onct an' I ain' gwine teck 'em out in a hurry.'

"'Hyar' she say, 'Walk in an' mek yo'se'f at home; we gwine gin you a mighty wo'm welcome,' an' right dar she grin behime Fox's back an' wunk at ol' man Hyar'. 'Git yo' moufs raidy, now, chillen!' she sing out ter de young uns, an' ol' Fox jes' lit inter scratchin', lak all possessed, an' de chillen sot dar an' gobbled 'taters faster'n he cu'd dig 'em out. Las' he 'gin ter git kind er wo'm, an' he say, 'Ouch! ouch!! ouch!!!' Mis' 'Hyar' say, 'Wat de marter, Mistah Fox, ain' yo' feet wo'm yit?'

"'Fox he ain' say nuttin', jes' go on a-scratchin', but pres'n'y his footses wuz dat scorched an' swunged dat he cu'dden stan' hit, an' he say, 'Jimminy Crick! Mis'

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Hyar', you mus' let me off on dis job, you sho'ly mus'. I reckon de chillen done got der fill by dis time, anyhow.'s.

"'Naw, mammy, dat we ain'! mek him go on,' dey sez, an' Mis' Hyar' she say, 'You year dat now. I kain't let my chillen go hongry, so I 'bleeged ter ax you ter go on, er else me an' my ol' man gotter fling you out dar in de fros'."

"Fox he set an' study a minnit 'bout w'icht wuz de wuss, de fire er de fros', an' las' he mek up his min' ter try de fire a li'l longer. Sidesen dat he wuz in de hopes er gittin' a 'tater fer his own sheer,'fo' dey wuz all gone. So he go on wid de scratchin' fer a w'ile, an' las' he kain't stan' hit no longer an' he bus' out ter yellin', 'Ow! ow! ow! ouch! lemme outen dis! putt me in de fros' er any place whar I kin cool my footses! m-m-m-m-umph! my footses done bu'nt clean offen me!"

"Dat wuz de trufe, too, an' w'en Mis' Hyar' see Fox ain' got no footses ter scratch wid no mo', dey jes' tuck him an' flung him out in de col' an' shet de do' on him. He went limp in' long li'l ways, colder'n uver, an' jes' a-studyin' how he gwine git back by dat fire. Pres'n'y he met up wid nu'rr Fox, a li'l young feller, easy ter fool, an' he say ter him, sezee, 'Heyo, young man, w'at you doin' canterin' roun' dis col' night; does yo' mammy know yo're out? You better come 'long go back wid me ter ol' man Hyar's. Dey got a rip-roarin' fire dar an' a lot er 'taters roas'in', an' dey'll let you git wo'm an' gin you a 'tater, too, jes' fer pullin' 'em outen de ashes."

"Mistah Young-fox say, 'Well, Mistah Slickry-sly, I ain' kyare ef I do.' So dey g'long back ter ol' Hyar's



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house an' knock, an' Slickry he 'splain dat he done brung someb'dy ter pull 'taters outen de ashes, so Mis' Hyar' she 'vite 'em in an' set de young feller ter wu'k.

"He wuz mighty peart 'bout hit at fus', but I let you know 'twan't long 'fo' he slack up, an' pres'n'y he wuz gruntin' an' groanin' an' lickin' his paws. Ol' Fox he sot dar an' aigged him on an' et taters wid de fambly an' hollered an' laughed w'en las' Young-fox drap a hot tater an' bolt fer de do'. 'Don' be in sech has'e,' he call out atter him; 'you gwine fin' mighty col' wedder outside.'

"Mis' Hyar' she putt on a sollum look an' she say, she do, 'Mistah Slickry Sly-fox, ain' you 'shame' ter mek fun er yo' feller creetur?'

"Fox he 'spon', 'Naw, *dat* I ain'. You done yearn befo' now dat mis'ry love comp'ny. You don' s'pose I wuz gwine be de on'ies' fox in dese diggin's whar go limp'in' roun' wid stumps fer footses? Naw, suh, not ef de co'te know hitse'f, an' hit think hit do.'

"Ol' man Hyar' let on lak he wuz clean outdone wid sech talk, an' he jes' tucken his foot 'way f'um Fox an' lan'ed him plumb outside de do', an' he say, sezee, "Teck dat, now, an' g'long, an' don' you come yer no mo' talkin' no sech a way ez dat befo' my li'l chillen; I don' want 'em ter l'arn sech 'havishness ter der feller creeturs. You year me, suh! now mosey, befo' I teck my foot 'way f'um you ag'in. I don' want'er hurt you, 'deed I don'.'

"Den he shet de do' an' come back, an' Mis' Hyar' she cuff de chillen all roun' fer scrabblin' in de ashes an' gittin' derse'fs dirty, an' den dey all went ter baid an' slep' jes' ez soun' ez ef dey ain' bu'nt de footses offen de foxes an' den turnt 'em a-loose in de col'."

HOW THE DEER LOST HIS UPPER TEETH

Aunt 'Phrony followed up the last story with one which dealt with that tricky little fellow, Mr. 'Hare. "You chillen," she commenced, "mebbe kin 'member, an' den ag'in mebbe you kain't, de tale I done tol' you onct 'bout de creeturs teekin' 'way de hawns f'um ol' Hyar' an' puttin' 'em on Mistah Deer's haid. Well, den, Hyar' he bin a-studyin' an' a-studyin' how he gwine git even wid him fer dat. So one day w'en he wuz settin' by de road, gnorrin' on de bark uv a black locus', 'long come Mistah Deer jes' a-lopin' by. Hyar' call out 'howdy' to 'im, an' he stop and pass de time er day. He see Hyar' jes' a-gnorrin' 'way an' he say, he do, 'Lawsy, Mistah Hyar', w'at pow'ful fine toofs you got. Huccome dey so sharp?"

"Hyar' he say, sezee, 'Thanky, suh, my toofs is right good and sharp, an' dis huccome dey so, dey ain' grow dat-a-way; I oon have 'em ef I did n' wu'k fer em; I done whet 'em myse'f er dey ain' be dis-a-way. Jes' look at me gnor dis bark. Lemme see yo' toofs, suh.'

"Deer he putt down his haid an' open his mouf wide, an' Hyar' he tucken him by de tongue an' peer inside, lak he might'ly consarned 'bout de state er Mistah Deer's toofs. He putt on a sollum look an' shuk his haid an' say, sezee, 'My! my! Mistah Deer, yo' toofs is in a pow'ful bad way. I dunno 't all how you mek out ter chaw yo' vittles; you mus' hatter gobble 'em down hull; I boun'



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ef de trufe wuz knowed, yo' stummick all out er order. You better lemme fix up dese toofs fer you 'fo' dey gits any wusser 'n w'at dey is; better let me whet 'em fer you.'

"Deer he 'low dat he have bin feelin' right squawmish in de stummick yer lately, an' he 'low, he do, 'I ain' bin blamin' hit on de toofs, but I reckon you'se right, an' ef you kin fix me up wid a outfit er vittle-'stroyers lak yo'n, jes' you go ahaid an' do hit, quick 'z you kin.'

"'All right,' sez Hyar, sezee, 'I'm yo' man; I gwine fix you up so's't you'll s'prise yo'se'f an' all yo' fambly, an' 'twon't be long 'fo' you'll fin' yo'se'f so fatted up dat li'l mo' an' you'd come bustin' thu yo' hide.' Wid dat he go off an' git him a rock an' den he come back an' say, 'Now, ol' man, jes' lay yo' haid back an' open yo' mouf wide an' gimme good elber-room an' I'll have you all whetted up in a jiff, so sharp 't you kin bite tenpenny nails in two ef you wanter.'

"Deer he 'low, 'Oh, lawsy! Mistah Hyar', I'se 'feard you gwine hu't me, deed I is!'

"'Fraidy-calf!' sez Hyar', sezee, 'how you reckon I gwine hu't you wid dis li'l ol' no-kyount rock. But I'll jes' g'long an' leave you wid dem mis'able stumps in yo' mouf, ef you sesso, dough I had hit in min' ter fix you so's't you cu'd mek yo' livin' heap easier dan you does now.'

"Deer he feel kind er 'shame' uv hisse'f an' he 'low, 'Oh, go ahaid, suh; reckon I ain' 'feard uv a li'l thing lak dat; I bin runnin' roun' thu dese woods 'mong's' de b'ars an' de wil'cats an' de wolfs too long ter be 'feard er w'at a li'l feller lak you kin do ter me. Go on wid de grindin'.'



HOW THE DEER LOST HIS UPPER TEETH

"Hyar' he clum up on a stump whar he cu'd reach good, an' den he jes' rub an' rub an' rub on Mistah Deer's upper toofs. W'en he got 'em groun' half-way down, Deer he think hit 'mence ter feel mighty queer an' he say, sezee, "Look-a-yer, Mistah Hyar', w'at you doin' to me? I 'clar' dat don' feel right, 'deed hit don'."

"'Is dasso?" Hyar' 'low. 'W'y I is s'prise'. But nem-mine, you gwine feel all right torreckly. I'se jes' 'mencin' ter git a nice aidge on yo' toofs, an' w'en I'se thu wid you, you kin gnor de bark offen de saplin's an' git yo'se'f sump'n ter eat sidesen dish yer triflin' moss you bin livin' off all dis time. I gwine fix you up so's't you kin gnor anything you 've a min' ter."

"Deer he 'low, 'Name er gracious! go on, den, in fer a penny, in fer a poun'! but don' be long 'bout hit, fer I mighty nigh wo' out.' He kep' gruntin' an' groanin' an' screwin', wid de col' shivers runnin' up an' down his back, an' Hyar' he kep' on grindin' an' grindin' 'twel po' ol' Deer ain' have nuttin' but de stumps uv his upper toofs lef' in his haid.

Den Hyar he 'low, 'Dar you is now, Mistah Deer, right ez a trivet, suh; jes' g'long an' gnor on de bark er dem saplin's yonner, an' I boun' you you'll be s'prise' ter fin' how easy 'tis."

"'Thanky, suh, all right, suh,' sez de Deer, sezec, 'I sut'n'y is 'bleeged ter you. I bin wantin' me sump'n diff'nt ter eat dis long time,' an' wid dat he walk over ter de saplin's.

"Hyar' he 'mence sneakin' an' slidin' off, but he ain' go fur; he hide behime a tree an' watch ter see w'at Deer gwine do. W'en Deer fine out he kain't gnor de bark 't all, an' dat his upper toofs mos' all gone, he jes' stomped

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his hufs an' r'ared 'roun'. 'Wufless li'l bunnel er trash!' he say. 'I wish 't I had 'im yer on one'r dese hawns er mine dis ve'y minnit. I boun' you I'd show 'im huc-come! Gone an' done me outer my toofs, wid nuttin' lef' but a ache in place uv 'em,' an' wid dat he shuk his hawns an' jes' r'ared 'roun' 'twel Hyar' wuz mos' 'feard ter show hisse'f.

"Las he cu'dden keep back his imp'ence no longer, so he stick his haid out an' say, 'Hi! yi! Mistah Deer, you 'pears ter be kind er stove up 'bout de toofs, ef I ain' mek no misteck. Ain' dat a pity! sho'! sho'! I'se s'prise' you trus' me wid dat job, I sut'n'y is, 'kase you moughter knowed I wuz gwine git even wid you fer wearin' dem hawns de creeturs tucken 'way f'um me, w'en you knowed dey wuz mine by rights. I reckon you done fergot how you drug me befo' de kyouncil, a pris'ner, but I tell you, suh, I ain' fergit hit; I bin waitin' all dis time ter git even, an' I 'low dat I done come up wid you, fer folks *kin* do widout hawns, but dey kain't git 'long ve'y well widout toofs, lessen dey teck ter swollerin' sop-vittles. Ain' dat de trufe? I leave hit ter you, suh, 'kase I knows dat you in a fix ter know all 'bout hit.'

"Wid dat he let out a big hoot an' step' off home widout waitin' ter look behime, an' lef' ol' Deer chawin' off de li'l buds an' young twigs, an' dat w'at de deers bin doin' uver sence, 'kase dey ain' got no upper toofs wuf speakin' uv ter do der chawin' wid."



THE HARE DISAPPEARS FOR EVER

"Umph!" said Eliza, when she had heard how the Deer came to have such short upper teeth. "Umph! I know Deer 'felt bad widout dem toofs; I *know* he did, 'kase I done los' my own, an' dish yer thing uv gommin' hit ain' w'at hits cracked up ter be, 'deed hit ain'. Hit don' s'prise me dat Deer wuz mad wid ol' Hyar'. I reckon dey kep' mighty cle'r uv one nu'r'r atter dat 'spe'yunce."

"'Deed dey ain', den," said Aunt 'Phrony. "Co'se Hyar' he try ter keep outen de way fer a li'l w'ile, but Deer he let on ter be fren'ly an' familious, waitin' fer de chanct ter git even wid him, an' dat th'ow Hyar' offen his gyard, an' he git so, pres'n'y, dat he ac' jes' 'z dough nuttin' done happen 'twix' 'em. Hit run on lak dat ontwel one time w'en Hyar' wuz gwine roun' tendin' ter be a doctah an' meddlin' an' muddlin' wid de sick folks.

"One day a baby git scalted wid hot water an' go ter cryin' an' hollerin' so dey kain't do nuttin' wid him. Hyar' he come dat way an' he say, he do, 'Hi! w'at on yearf is de marter wid dat chil'? He howl wusser'n any ol' wolf on de mountain; done split my years f'um top ter bottom.'

"Dey tol' 'im w'at wuz de marter wid de chil', an' he say, sezee, 'Jes' lemme see dat chil'; I'se a doctah, an' I boun' you I kin gin him sump'n dat 'll ease de pain an' mek him stop cryin', fer I tell you p'intedly dat I'se a fuss'-class doctah, an' ef any un you feelin' kind er



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doncey he better insult me 'bout hit right now, 'kase I dunno w'en he gwine git de chanct ag'in.'

" 'Well,' dey ses ter him, 'w'at kin you do fer burns?'

" 'You lemme 'lone fer dat,' sezee. 'I does hit wid water, but ef I wuz ter tell you jes' how, de chawm done be bruk. You mus' putt me in de house an' den shet de do' an' fill up all de chinks an' den go 'way a li'l piece, fer I mus' be so't eye kain't see ner year lissen at me.'

" 'All right,' dey ses, an' den dey went ter w'uk fillin' up de chinks, dobbin' 'em wid clay, an' w'ile dey 'z doin' dat Hyar' he sa'nter roun' kind er kyarless an' foun' a li'l hole whar he cu'd git out ef anything wuz ter happen, 'kase he seed de baby wuz nigh mos' daid an' he'z 'feard dey mought blame him fer hit. 'My, my!' he sez ter hisse'f, 'I didn' s'pose de chil' wuz dat bad off er I oon 'a tol' 'em I wuz a doctah. I wish I wuz safe outer dis, but I gotter go thu wid hit now. My! my! dis shows me I better stick ter de trufe atter dis.'

" 'Well, de folks got de dobbin' done an' den dey walked 'way f'um de house a piece ter see w'at gwine happen. Hyar' he tuck an' tuck de baby an' soused hit in de water an' de chil' gin one onyearfly yell an' den wuz still, an' Hyar' he see dat 'twuz plumb daid, an' he say ter hisse'f, sezee, 'Come on, Doctah Hyar', le's we-all git outen dis in a hurry ef we know w'at good fer us,' an' he ga'rr hisse'f toge'rr ter spring out er de hole.

" 'Now, de mammy er de chil' she done stay behime ter lissen, an' w'en she year de baby yell she call ter de res', 'Come yer, quick, all er you! hurry up fas' 'z you kin! Dat owdacious hypermocrit done kill my chil', I know he have! Bus' in de do', you-all, an' nab him 'fo' he kin

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git off. Ef he done hurt my chil' I ain' gwine leave one spear er hya'r on his mis'able hide! You year me now!'

"So de folks come a-runnin' an' bus' in de do' an' foun' de chil' layin' dar daid. Hyar' he run outen de hole, an' de ooman she set de dogs on 'im an' dey chased him inter a hole in de tree an' stood dar keepin' gyard ontwel de ooman come up. De people rushed up, yellin' an' callin', an' de dogs wuz darnsin' roun' yappin' an' yowlin', an' de ooman wuz cryin' an' kyar'yin' on an' bellerin', 'Oh, lemme git at him; jes' lemme putt my han's on him onct an' he'll wish he'd died 'fo' he wuz bawned!' Ol' Hyar' think his time done come fer sho'.

"De ooman tucken a stick an' twis' hit roun' in de tree, an' she say, sez she, 'Um-umph! got you now, mis'able li'l thief-an'-body-snatcher! Atter you wid a sharp stick, sho' 'nuff. Gwine git you dis time!' Las' she twis' him outen de tree an' he fall right inter her lap. She snatched him by de scruff er de neck an' 'gun ter lamm him fus' on one jaw an' den on tu'rr, talkin' at him all de time, 'Kill my baby, will you! Meddle wid de doctah's trade, will you! Play de torm-fool wid us all, will you! Teck dat, now! an' dat! an' dat!'

"De ooman she done skunt one'r his laigs wid de stick, an' hit 'mence ter smart him right much, so he say, mighty meek an' numble, 'Please, ma'am, fer ter let me down a minnit w'ile I fix my laig; hit done smart me lak a hull nes'ful er wast-es. Kill me ef you gotter, but, fer de lan' sake, lemme fix dis laig fus'!'

"De ooman wuz fool 'nuff ter let him down, an' I boun' ter let you know dat he did'n' let de grass grow unner his footses; not him. He wuz off an' hid 'way down in de woods in a kyave quicker'n I kin tell hit.

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"De ooman cu'dden tell how in de name er goodness she gwine git even wid him, so she call all de folks to-ge'rr an' ax 'em fer fer he'p tell her how ter do hit. W'iles dey wuz talkin' 'long come de Deer, an' year w'at dey say, an' he sez, sezee, 'Sho'! dat's easy ez rollin' offen a log. Leave dat ter me; I'se de man whar kin fix up dis job. W'y, I kin sen' dat feller clean over de ocean, so fur he nuver kin git back ag'in, ef you sesso.'

"De folks hilt a li'l confab an' mek up der min's dey bes' let Deer git redd er de Hyar'. 'Deed dat I will,' sezee, an' he went sa'nterin' 'long, jes' ez gaily ez you



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please down inter de woods. Hyar' yearn him comin' an' peeped outer de kyave ter see who 'twuz. W'en he see 'twuz Deer he mek up his min' ter come out an' pass de time er day wid him, 'kase he thought Deer wuz his fren' an' wuz fool 'nuff ter s'pose Deer done fergot all 'bout havin' his toofs groun' down. So he come prancin' out, jes' ez peart ez a lizzud.

"Deer he say, 'Howdy, ol' man; whar you bin keepin' yo'se'f all dis time? Mus'n' hide yo'se'f 'way f'um yo' fren's; dey jes' natchelly kain't git 'long widout you. I come ter ax you ef you oon lak ter go 'long er me an' teck a li'l walk dish yer fine day. Do you good; you look kinder pindlin'."

"Hyar' kind er tired er stayin' in de kyave all 'lone, so he say, 'Dat I will! I'se mo' tickelt dan a b'ar wid a bee-gum ter see you onct mo'. Pow'ful lonesome, suh, roun' dese diggin's, pow'ful lonesome; dis de fus' time I uver 'spicioned dat I wuz n't good comp'ny."

"Dey went romantin' thu de woods an' pres'n'y dey come to a branch, an' Deer he say ter ol' Hyar', 'Well, now, my soople-jack fren', does you think you kin jump dish yer?"

"'Dat I kin,' sez Hyar', sezee, 'a li'l ol' narrer stream lak dis; dis nuttin' 't all. Kin you?"

"'Oh, I reckon I mought mek out ter spraddle 'cross somehows,' sez Deer, 'le's we-all step back a piece an' gin a run an' a spring toge'rr an' see w'icht kin cle'r de branch bes'."

"'All right,' sez Hyar, sezee, an' wid dat dey run to'des de branch. Hyar' he gin a monst'ous jump dat lan' him clean on tu'rr side, but Deer ain' jump 't all, jes' stan' at de aidge er de branch laughin'. Hyar' he



AT THE BIG HOUSE

baig him f'um tu'rr side not ter be 'feard but ter ga'rr his laigs toge'rr an' jump lak he have some sense an' not stan' dar grinnin' lak a plumb iji't.

"De mo' he baig de mo' Deer stan' still, an' pres'n'y de branch 'mence ter git wider an' wider 'twel hit look 'zackly lak de ocean, an dat's w'at 'twuz, sho' 'nuff, fer Deer was a mighty big cunjere in dem days, an' he done made de ocean look narrer ez a branch, so's't he cu'd fool ol' Hyar'. W'en he got him across he tucken de spell offen Hyar's eyes an' let him see dat he done cross over de ocean an' kain't git back ag'in, an' dar whar he bin uver sence, dat ol'-time mischief-mekin' Gre't Hyar'. Dish yer w'at we have now is jes' a li'l no-kyount, harmless kin er his'n, an' all dat's lef' er de ol' doin's is jes' dese yer tales w'at I bin tellin' you. But dish yer's de las' uv him, 'kase I done sont him clean 'cross de big water, so I kain't tell you no mo' uv his doin's, even ef you wuz ter be yer ter year me tell 'em, w'ich dat you won' be; you gwine be fur 'nuff 'way f'um we-all an' all yo' kinry," and here the old woman threw her arms about the children and led the very sincere chorus of regret from these humble friends who had added so much to the pleasure of the visit and whom they were not to see again. For the old plantation was sold not many years after, and their mother never went back.

When the children were grown they wandered once more to the spot which had been the home of their ancestors for more than a hundred years, but all was changed, all the faces unfamiliar, and Aunt 'Phrony and Aunt Nancy lay peacefully beneath the spreading trees of the old negro burial-lot back of the garden, where so many faithful black heads had been laid in the

THE HARE DISAPPEARS FOR EVER

days that were gone,—those unreturning days when between the white man and the black were confidence and esteem and faith and trust and affection. As they turned away from the spot they sighed regretfully for these things, gone as utterly and surely as Molly Hare herself has vanished from the firesides of her once cordial hosts, banished by the arts of a powerful conjuror who performs many wonderful feats and incantations through the agency of twenty-six nimble little characters, known as the letters of the alphabet.

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